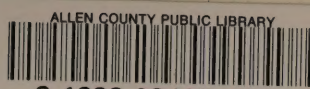


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History of Coffee County,
Alabama, 1840-1871

HISTORY OF COFFEE COUNTY, ALABAMA,

1840 - 1871

By

DENEY MAURICE JOHNSON

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in the College of
Arts and Sciences in the University of Alabama.

University, Alabama

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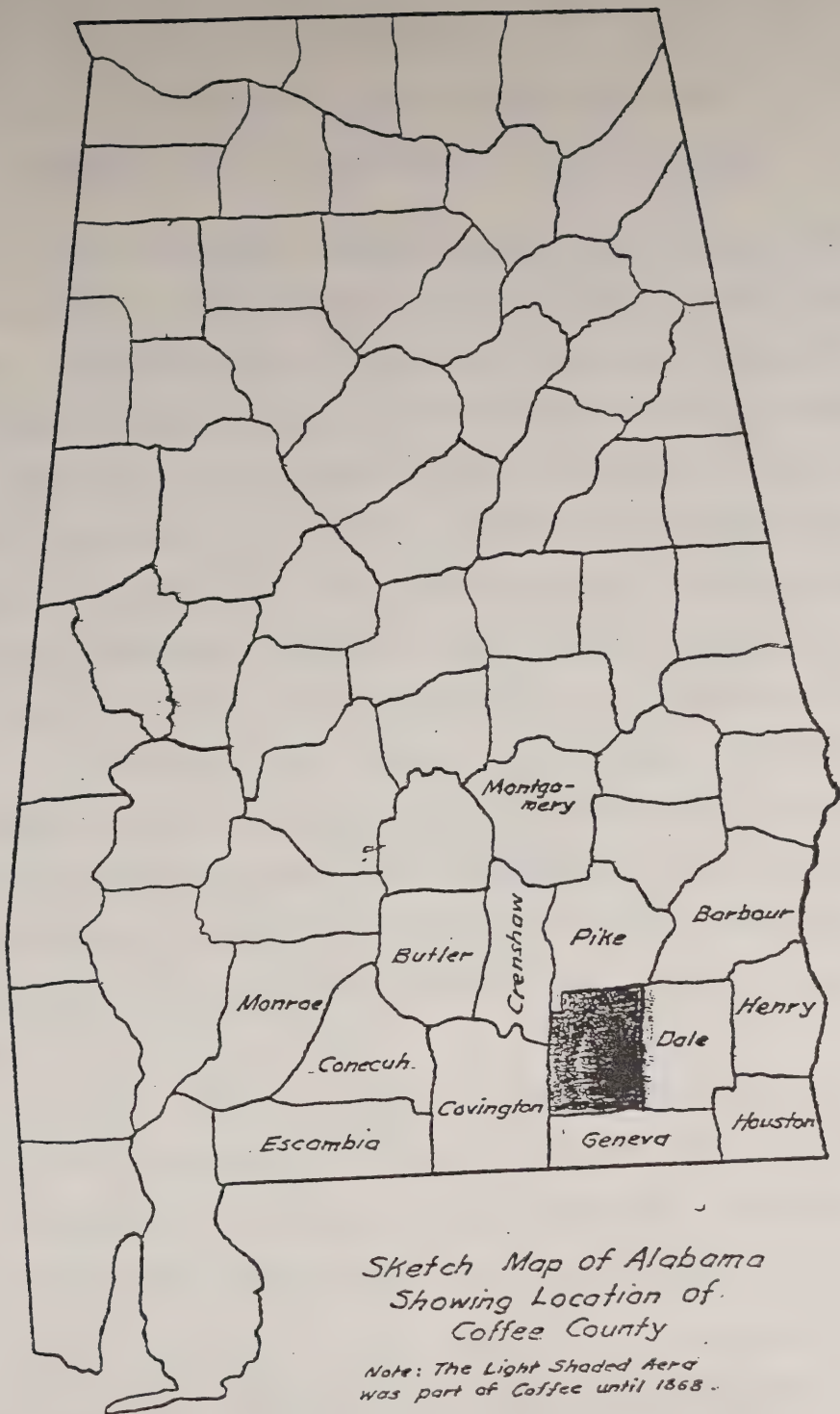
INTRODUCTION

That part of the Lower South, comprising the most Southern counties and not including seaboard cities and the river region, has been neglected by historians. This has been true perhaps because of the following reasons: it is a poor country, generally called in Georgia "the Piney Woods", in Alabama "the Wire-Grass", in Mississippi and Louisiana "the Bayou Country." It has been lacking in color, with little to strike the eye of those seeking the sensational or attractive. It has contributed few outstanding political, military, or socially prominent individuals. Finally source materials relative to its history have proved to be hard to obtain, few newspapers having been published there, official records being sparse, and very few family papers having been preserved.

Yet, the history of this large region must be compiled before a comprehensive historical account of the Lower South and of the states of that region may be written. This study is presented as a contribution to that end.

The period covered by this work is from the creation of one county of this region until shortly after the Civil War. An attempt has been made to trace the political, economic, and social development of that county during those years.

The relatively easier task of carrying the story from 1871 to more recent times remains to be undertaken.



CHAPTER I

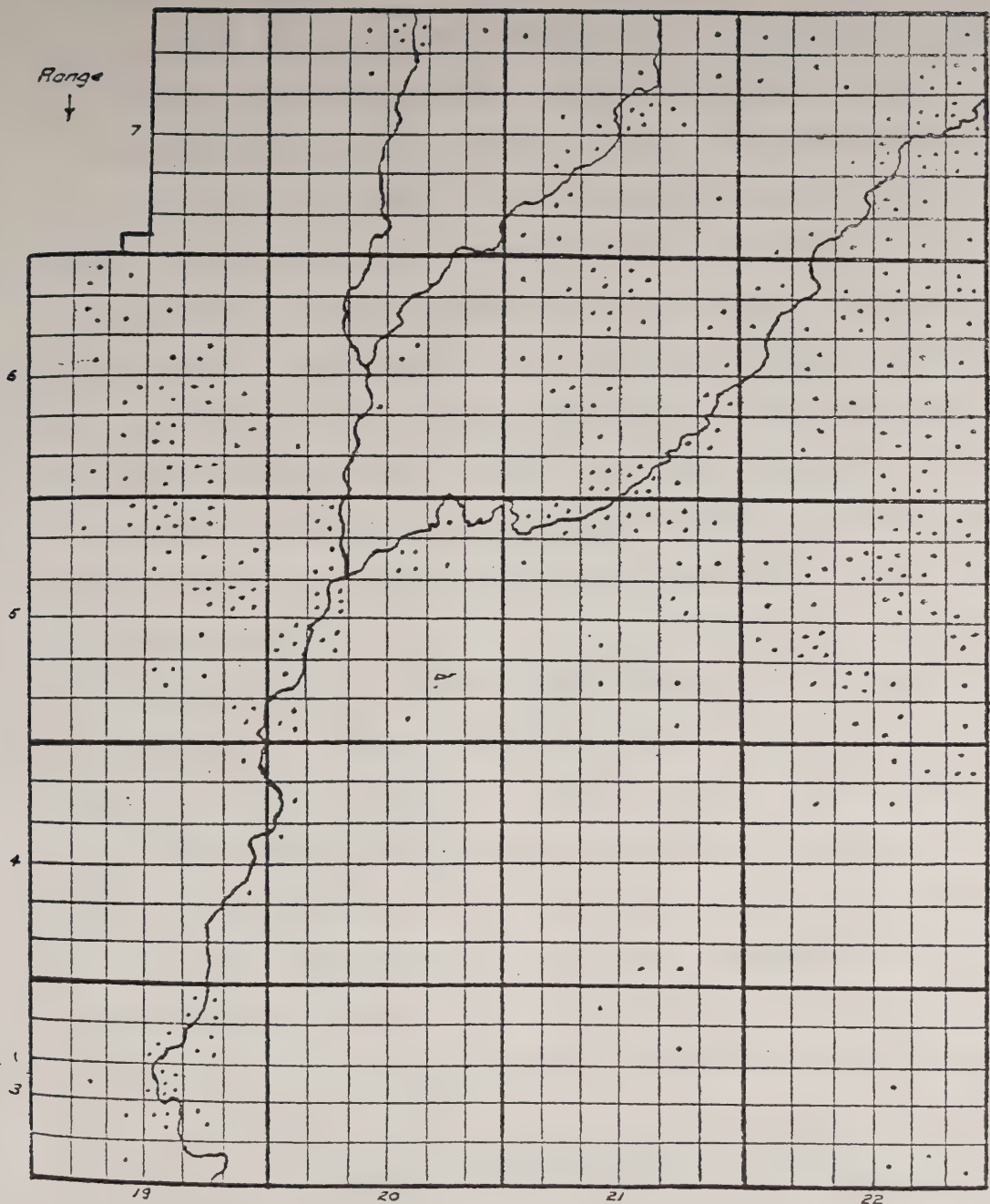
THE CREATION OF COFFEE COUNTY AND THE STRUGGLE OVER THE LOCATION OF THE COUNTY SEAT

As the nineteenth century opened, the lands of the south central Alabama area from which later Coffee County was to be carved were in the Creek Indian territory, but the Indians did not have any permanent towns in its area. The Creeks had their towns farther to the east on the Chattahoochee River and in the Coosa - Tallapoosa region to the north.¹ Nevertheless, the Indians were the chief obstacle to white settlement in this region and the country could not be opened up until Indian domination of the land was broken.

The Treaty of Fort Jackson in 1814 which ended the Creek War of 1813-14, threw open to settlement almost half of the area of the present state of Alabama. This included the future Coffee County but settlers did not come in large numbers to this piney woods country until almost twenty years later.

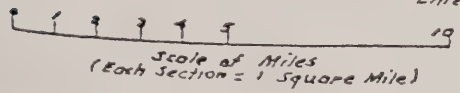
Even so, the first federal sale of land in Future Coffee County was made in 1812, two years before the public land office was established in Killedgeville, Georgia where parcels of this Creek country were sold to the conquering

1. Thomas McAdory Owen, History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography, Vol. I., p. 293



Present Day Map of
Coffee County

Each Dot Represents a person Who
Entered Land Before 1840



whites. John D. Player bought land in township five, range nineteen, and section four.² It is not known whether he settled the land or not. At any rate he was the only legal landowner in the county for twelve years. The next recorded entry of land was in 1824, when Reddin Weeks, Lewis Hutchinson, and Samuel W. Pearman bought land in township three and range nineteen. James Harrison entered land in 1826, but the next sales were not made until 1830.

A total of three hundred and eleven people purchased public land in the 1830's. The two most significant years of this decade, from a land sale point of view, were 1838, when eighty-nine persons bought land, and 1836 when eighty-four people entered land from the government. Through 1839, a total of three hundred and sixteen people had bought land in Coffee County.

Politically the land to which these settlers came had been subject to various claims and negotiations since the Spaniards first entered it. It has been in turn Spanish territory, then French, then British, then Spanish again, and finally and definitely it was recognized as a part of the United States. All this time it was in fact a possession of the Creek Indians. Later it was to be a part of Georgia, then part of the Mississippi Territory, then of Alabama Territory

2. Coffee County Deed Book, p. 50. Located in the Secretary of State's office, Montgomery. See map page 5, section encircled.

and finally the State of Alabama. Various counties, too, had held this land: Washington, Monroe, Conecuh, Henry, and then Dale before finally it was to emerge as a political entity all its own, only itself to share still later in the birth of Geneva County and to give a small portion of itself also to Crenshaw County.

The Treaty of Paris in 1763, between Great Britain and the United States at the end of the American Revolution, had fixed the thirty-first parallel of latitude as the boundary line between the United States and Spanish Florida. This treaty fixed the future southern boundary of Coffee. Some of the territory north of this line, including all of the future Coffee County, was claimed by Spain and known to the Spaniards as part of the Province of West Florida. This territory had been ceded by France to Great Britain in 1763, but the Spaniards had not recognized this cession and indeed had conquered it in 1781. Eventually, by the Treaty of 1795, between the United States and Spain, the latter ceded her claim to the territory known as West Florida which Spain said embraced that part of the country lying south of a line drawn through the mouth of the Yazoo River ($32^{\circ} 20'$) east to the Chattahoochee River.³

3. This line passes through what is now Montgomery and therefore the territory involved was approximately one third of Alabama, the southern third of which includes Coffee County

In May, 1798, the United States Congress, with the consent of the State of Georgia, had organized the southern portion of all that country lying between thirty-one degrees and thirty-two degrees and twenty minutes into the Mississippi Territory. This is the first time that the future Coffee County had come directly under the control of the federal government. In 1804, the Mississippi Territory was extended north to the Tennessee line.⁴

What is now Coffee County at the opening of the nineteenth century was in Washington County, which was created on June 4, 1800, by Governor Winthrop Sargent of the Mississippi Territory. Washington is the oldest, in name, of the present day Alabama Counties and it was not all in what is now Alabama. Indeed, by eastern standards it was an enormous county, being more than half as large as all New England. Washington embraced all the country between the Chattahoochee River on the east and the Pearl River to the west in Mississippi and the parallel thirty-one degrees on the south and thirty-two degrees and twenty-eight minutes on the north.⁵

By proclamation of David Holmes, then Governor of the Mississippi Territory, on June 29, 1816, Washington County lost much of its extent including present day Coffee, to the newly created Monroe County.⁶ This county embraced all of

4. Owen, op. cit., Vol. II., p. 1000.

5. Ibid., Vol., II, p. 1331

6. Ibid., Vol., II, p. 1032

the lands which had been ceded by the Creeks in the Treaty of Fort Jackson, August 9, 1814, and included nearly one half of the present area of Alabama. But in a very short time Monroe's dimensions were reduced by the successive formation of Montgomery, Wilcox, and in 1819 of Conecuh Counties. Coffee was a part of the latter.

The Mississippi Territory by 1819 had been divided (on December 10, 1817) and the eastern part had been organized into the Alabama Territory. Alabama had been made a state by act of Congress on March 2, 1819. Nearly all of South Alabama was then included in Conecuh County, which was created on February 13, 1818, by the legislature of the Alabama Territory.⁷

The first session of the legislature of Alabama, on December 13, 1819, divided Conecuh into several counties of which Henry was one.⁸ Coffee, along with what are now Covington, Dale, Geneva, and parts of Crenshaw, Pike, and Barbour, besides present day Henry, were embraced in this large southeast Alabama county known as Henry.

7. Acts Passed at the First Session of the First General Assembly of the Alabama Territory; In the Forty-Second Year of the American Independence, p. 96

8. Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Alabama, Passed at its First Session, Which was begun and held in the Town of Huntsville, on Monday, the Twenty-fifth day of October, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Nineteen and ended the Seventeenth day of December the Same Year, p. 5. (hereinafter cited as Acts of the Alabama Legislature).

Coffee County was next a part of Dale, which was created from Henry on December 22, 1824.⁹ Dale at that time included what is now Coffee, Dale, and Geneva Counties.

Eventually, on December 3, 1841, William O. Winston, Representative from DeKalb, reported a bill from the Committee on County Boundaries, to the House of Representatives to create a new county from the western portion of Dale.¹⁰ The bill, as first presented, had blanks where the name of the new county would be filled in. At the third reading of the bill, Archiblad H. Justice, Representative from Dale, moved to fill in the blanks wherever they occurred with the name "Coffee" to honor General John Coffee. On the motion of W. S. Taylor, from Fayette, the bill was amended by an engrossed rider so as to name the county seat of said county "Wellborn." The amendment was accepted and the motion was adopted by the House on December 22, 1841.¹¹

The same day, Angus McAllister, Senator from Covington, from the committee to which was referred the bill to create a new county, reported the same back to the Senate. The bill was read and ordered to a second reading. On December 27, 1841, the bill came up for a final reading, with the amendments

9. Acts of the Alabama Legislature (1824), p. 79.

10. The Flag of the Union, Tuscaloosa, Alabama December 16, 1841.

11. Ibid., December 22, 1841.

which the House had adopted, and was passed by the Senate. The bill to create Coffee County finally became law on December 29, 1841. The county as created contained parts of the later created Geneva and Crenshaw Counties. The boundaries were: on the west, the range line dividing ranges eighteen and nineteen; on the east, the range line dividing ranges twenty-two and twenty-three; on the north, the township line dividing townships seven and eight; and on the south the famous thirty-first parallel, then the border between Alabama and Florida.¹²

Already, by 1841, Coffee was filling with settlers coming in from Georgia and other Southeastern states. The Indian wars were still fresh in the minds of the people, and it was natural that the county and county seat should have been named for two heroes of these wars. General John Coffee, for whom the county was named, served under General Andrew Jackson during the Creek Indian War of 1813-14. He also saw service at the battle of New Orleans as Commander of the Mounted Tennesseans.¹⁴ The county seat was named for General William Wellborn, who was one of the Alabama Commanders in the Creek Indian War of 1836-37.¹⁵

12. Ibid., January 5, 1842.

13. Acts of the Alabama Legislature (1841-42), p. 152.

14. Willis Brewer, Alabama: Her History, Resources, War Record and Public Men. From 1640 to 1872, p. 296

15. William Roan Tipton, The Removal of the Creek Indians from Alabama to the Indian Territory in 1836, p. 13.

The creating act appointed Commissioners to secure a suitable place for a seat of justice. The commissioners, Britton T. Atkinson, James Claxton, Thomas Cole, and Amen Higgins, were to secure not over one hundred and sixty acres of land; not over six miles from the center of the county and closer if possible. They had power to let contracts for the erection of the public buildings, and to sell lots in the town site to the highest bidder to secure money to pay for the buildings. The acts also provided for Coffee to continue to vote with Dale until the next appointment, and the voting precincts were to remain the same. An election was called to be held the first Monday in March, 1842, for the purpose of electing county officers, but any officer of Dale living in Coffee would get to serve out his term.¹⁶

The Commissioners apparently experienced difficulty in choosing the site for Wellborn. Controversy as to alternative sites was such that they deemed it wise to give all the people the right to vote on this issue. Consequently on February 1, 1843, a subsequent act of the Legislature provided for the sheriff to advertise an election for this purpose. The act further specified that the election should be announced twenty-days in advance from three places in the county including Bentonville and that the election for county officers should be held at the same time, the first Monday

16. Acts of the Alabama Legislature (1841-42), p. 162.

in May, 1843. After the location of Wellborn should have been determined, the sheriff was empowered to appoint commissioners to build a court house and jail, and to sell lots to raise money for the buildings.¹⁷

Again, controversy over this issue seems to have flared. Apparently the question was not put to the people in May, 1843. The county officers, however, were elected and commissioned. They were: William Peoples, Sheriff; Bartley H. Tucker, Clerk of the Circuit Court; Benjamin F. Tucker, Clerk of the County Court; and James Claxton, Judge of the County Court.¹⁸ This was done before the office of the Judge of Probate was created; meanwhile the Judge of the County Court carried out the duties of the present Probate Judge.

Sooner or later the thorny question as to the location of the county seat had to be resolved. Once more the State Legislature was called upon to create a commission to undertake this unpleasant duty. The bill presented to the Legislature, however, was such that the faction which wanted Wellborn to be built in the center of the county carried their point. The bill called for appointment of commissioners to select on or before the first Monday in March of that year, as a site for the county seat, forty acres of land which should be located within one mile of the center of the county

17. Acts of the Alabama Legislature (1842-43), p. 74.

18. Gwen, op. cit., Vol. I., p. 237.

and on suitable ground for a town. The Commissioners were to have power to let contracts for the public buildings and to sell lots to the highest bidders. This bill was enacted into law on January 23, 1843.¹⁹

The commissioners decided on a location at township four, range 20, and section 34, and laid off a town which was called Wellborn, as provided in the act of the legislature creating the county. The act of the legislature, from which these Commissioners obtained their authority, provided that the county seat be located within one mile of the center of the county, but the site the Commissioners picked for Wellborn was approximately three miles from the center.²⁰ The Commissioners were either ignorant of the provisions of the act or willfully disregarded the directions of the legislature. The act provided that the site selected should be on a ground suitable for a town, and the Commissioners may have reached the decision there was not a suitable location within one mile of the center of the county.

The court house and jail were completed in 1843. They were made of logs and very crudely constructed.²¹ Some lots in the town site were sold, but there is no extant knowledge that any private buildings were erected at Wellborn.

19. Acts of the Alabama Legislature (1845-1846), p. 170.

20. See map, page 5.

21. Manuscript History of Coffee County, written by and in possession of J. A. Carnley, Elba, Alabama.

After the county seat had been moved to Elba, the county sold the old county seat property at Wellborn to William Peacock. There were forty acres in the plot which sold for two hundred and ten dollars.²² The property is now being cultivated. All signs of the former public buildings are gone. Wellborn was located about one quarter mile east of the present Damascus Baptist Church.

The court house at Wellborn was destroyed by fire in March, 1851. The story still persists that the burning of the court house was arson, as most of the people were not satisfied with its location. There is nothing to support this story, for charges were not brought against anyone. The legislature in February, 1852, passed an act authorizing the Probate Judge to procure suitable and separate books in which to record anew all deeds, marriage licenses and other papers required by law to be recorded.²³

The legislature on December 16, 1851, authorized the Probate Judge and Commissioners of Roads and Revenue to levy a tax, not to exceed fifty percent of the state tax, for the express purpose of building a court house and appurtenances for the County.²⁴ It was the intention of the legislature for the new court house to be built at the location where the

22. Coffee County Deed Book C, p. 231.

23. Acts of the Alabama Legislature (1851-52), p. 327

24. Ibid., p. 445.

old one burned.

The people had never been satisfied with the location of the county seat and did not wish for it to be rebuilt at Wellborn. The legislature had arbitrarily stated that the county seat should be close to the center of the county without taking into consideration the wishes of the people or the fact that the center area was the most sparsely settled in the county. Most of the people lived in the northern part, centered around Elba, at the junction of the Pea River and White Water Creek; and around Indigo Head (Clintonville) located at township five, range twenty-one, section thirteen, and situated, as was Elba, on the main east and west road.

Due to opposition to rebuilding the court house at the relatively inaccessible Wellborn, the legislature, on January 30, 1852, passed an act directing the sheriff to hold an election, on the first Monday in August, 1852, to determine the permanent location of the court house. The voters were authorized to select Wellborn, Elba, or Indigo Head, and the site receiving a majority of the votes was to be the county seat, provided the citizens of the town should build a good and substantial court house and jail free of charge to the county.²⁵ This act assured that the county seat would be moved from Wellborn, for there was not enough

25. Ibid., p. 434

voters in that section of the county to carry the election, nor were there residents to build the prescribed edifices.

James D. McLean was sheriff at the time of the election and O. W. Garrett and John L. Benton were managers. On October 5, 1852, they made and assigned the certificate of the result of the election as follows:

We, James D. McLean, Sheriff of Coffee County, and O. W. Garrett and John L. Benton, managers of the election held yesterday at Wellborn, the court house of Coffee, and at the different precincts in said county, do hereby certify that the following is a correct statement of the results of said election for the permanent seat of justice for Coffee County under an act of the last (sic) session of the legislature of the State of Alabama, upon consolidating the results from the several precincts of said county, viz; Elba has 491 votes and Indigo Head has 433, which gives Elba 58 votes majority, and we therefore hereby declare Elba to be elected. Witness our hands and seals this the fifth day of October, A. D., 1852.

James D. McLean, Sheriff (Seal)
O. W. Garrett, Manager (Seal)
John L. Benton, Manager (Seal)²⁶

The citizens of the town of Elba were well pleased over the selection of their town as the county seat. A mass meeting was held and F. H. Gammons, Micajah Harper and James M. Cauthen were appointed as a building committee to see to the construction of the court house and jail. J. E. Simmons donated the square for the court house and a suitable lot for the jail. It is not known how the money was raised to pay

26. Copied from the original election returns in the State Department of Archives and History.

for the construction of the buildings, for Elba was not incorporated at this time.

The court house when completed was a painted two story building with a painted paling fence around it. As tobacco chewing was prevalent, it was customary to keep saw dust on the floor of the court room. To this end barrels of saw dust were conveniently provided.²⁷

The title to the court house and jail were conveyed to the county on September 12, 1853. The deed conveying the property to the county reads as follows:

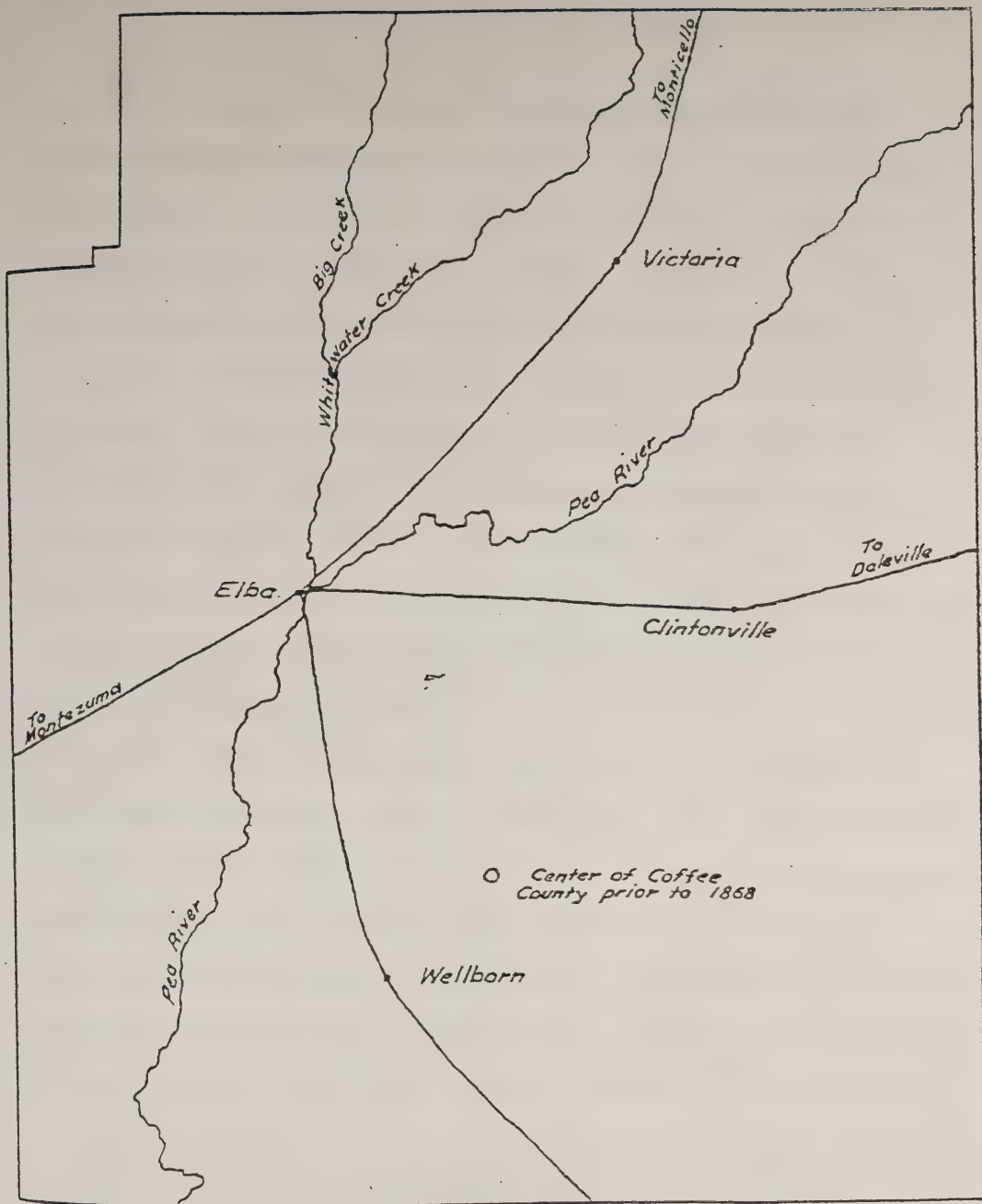
That in consideration of an act of the legislature of the State of Alabama passed January 30, 1852, which provided that the town receiving the highest number of votes, shall be the permanent seat of justice for the County of Coffee, provided said town shall build a good and substantial court house and jail, free of charge to said county, and the town of Elba having received the majority of all the votes cast in said election and the citizens of said town having complied with the law in such cases, made and provided, have given, granted, conveyed, and confirmed and by these presents doth give, grant, confirm unto Coffee County said house, erected upon the public square, said public square deeded by J. B. Simmons to James Claxton, Probate Judge of Coffee, and to the Commissioners of Revenue and Roads for said County, on the twelfth day of September, 1853, and their successors in office for the use of Coffee County. ²⁸

It took eleven years for the people of Coffee County to agree upon a permanent site for the county seat. It

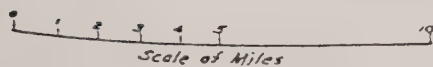
27. Carnley, op. cit.,

28. Coffee County Deed Book E, p. 575.

is interesting to note that it has remained on the same square in Elba since that time.



Map of Coffee County
Showing Principal Roads and Villages
of 1850



CHAPTER II

SOCIAL LIFE IN THE FIFTIES

N. A. Agee, a Montgomery businessman, traveling through Coffee County in the 1850's found few attractions there for a traveler as he perceived mostly a succession of pine trees and tall waving grass. Herds of cattle were lazily grazing amid this luxurious natural pasture, or lying down surfeited with the abundant nourishing supply of food. When he wrote later in 1909, Agee recalled a tract of level, sparsely settled, unbroken forests of yellow pine which offered few variations for the eye. There was a covered bridge across Pea River which Agee described, but his attention was focused mostly on the roads which he found to be rough.¹

There were not any good roads in the 1850's and indeed very few public roads of any kind. The main roads connected Elba with the county seats of the adjoining counties. One led from Elba through Indigo Head (Clintonville) to Daleville, one westward to Montezuma (Andalusia) in Covington County, one north to Troy in Pike County, and one south through Geneva to the Gulf at Fort Walton.² These roads

1. The Montgomery Advertiser, July 18, 1909.

2. Taken from a map of Alabama for 1850, located in the Alabama Department of Archives and History.

were very crude, being little more than clearings through the woods. In the low miry places logs were used to form a corduroy bed to prevent bogging. Farms and homesites were widely scattered and the roads between communities were maintained by the individuals. The usual mode of travel was by horseback.

The relatively light influx of settlers to Coffee County which started in the 1830's continued through the 1840's and 1850's. The United States Census of 1850 showed a population of 5,940, 5,380 of whom were white; 557 were slaves, and three were free persons of color. This figure had increased to 9,623 by 1860, when the whites numbered 8,200, the slaves, 1417 and the free persons of color six.³

There were 893 white families in Coffee county in 1850 with an average of 6.03 people per family, whereas, in 1860 there were 1,375 families with an average of 5.96 people per family. For Alabama at large these figures stood at 5.81 and 5.47. When these figures are compared with those on wealth the conclusion is reached that the people of Coffee County were following the normal condition wherein poorer people have more children than do rich ones.⁴

3. Photographic Reproductions of the Manuscript sheets of the United States Census Enumerators for Alabama in 1850 and 1860, University of Alabama Library. In view of the fact that all the figures on population and slavery in this study are compilations based upon this material, footnote references are hereafter excluded to other materials examined.

4. Clanton W. Williams, Statistical Atlas of Antebellum Alabama.

As in all frontier settlements, a large percentage of the people of Coffee County was born in other localities. Most of the original settlers came from Georgia and all except about three per cent of the others came from South Carolina and North Carolina. No rich Virginia planters moved into this section of Alabama. By 1850 more than half of the total white population was born in Alabama. The figure was 55.93 per cent. This percentage by 1860 had increased to 58.48. Nearly all of those not natives of Alabama had been born south of the Mason and Dixon line.

The following table gives a synthesis of the origin of this group:

ORIGIN OF SOUTHERN POPULATION

STATE	1850		1860	
	NO.	PER CENT	NO.	PER CENT
Total Whites	5,380		8,200	
Alabama	2,896	53.83	4,894	59.69
Georgia	1,218	20.78	2,177	26.54
South Carolina	584	10.85	649	7.91
North Carolina	441	8.19	411	5.01
Florida	107	1.98	98	1.19
Virginia	17		19	
Mississippi	9		6	
Tennessee	7		9	
Kentucky	2		2	
Arkansas	1		0	
Louisiana			5	
Texas			2	
Maryland			1	

Only ten people in the county in 1850 were born north of the Mason and Dixon line; in 1860, this figure was eleven.

The following table gives the origin of this group:

ORIGIN OF NORTHERN POPULATION

<u>STATE</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>
New York	4	6
Massachusetts	2	2
Delaware	2	1
New Jersey	1	1
Connecticut	1	
Vermont		1

In 1850, there were twelve people who were born in foreign countries; in 1860, this number was fourteen. The countries in which these people were born are shown in the following table:

ORIGIN OF FOREIGN POPULATION

<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>
Scotland	4	2
Ireland	3	4
Holland	1	
England	1	1
Denmark	1	
Germany	1	3
Jamaica	1	
Poland		4

There was an overall population increase of sixty-two per cent from 1850 to 1860. The increase of the white population was fifty-two per cent. In the year 1850 there was

a total of two hundred and three births to the whites and free persons of color and thirteen births of slaves. Only sixty-two deaths occurred among the whites and free persons of color and only four slaves died.⁵ The population was increasing rapidly from natural causes.

Most of the settlers in Coffee County were poor, but some owned slaves and brought the slaves with them to their new homes. In 1850, there were 557 slaves in the county, who formed 9.38 per cent of the total population. By 1860 the number of slaves had increased to 1,417, an increase of 154 per cent over 1850. In 1860 the slaves formed 14.78 per cent of the total population. One hundred and twenty-eight, or 14.33 per cent of the total number of white families, owned slaves in 1850. In 1860, there were 239 slaveholders, who represented 17.38 per cent of the total number of white families.

There were only a few large slave holdings in Coffee County. In 1850, the average number of slaves per owner was 4.35; by 1860, this had increased to 5.93. In 1850, 116 persons owned less than ten slaves; in 1860 this figure stood at 196. In 1850, only twelve persons owned ten or more slaves; in 1860 this number had been increased to forty-three.

5. Seventh Census of the United States (1850).

The distribution of slave ownership is shown in the following table:

DISTRIBUTION OF SLAVE OWNERSHIP		
<u>NUMBER OF SLAVES</u>	<u>NUMBER OF OWNERS</u>	
	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>
1	45	64
2	15	34
3	8	26
4	9	17
5	12	15
6	7	16
7	8	12
8	7	9
9	4	5
10 and under 15	9	17
15 and under 20	2	14
20 and under 30	1	7
30 and under 40		4
41		1

As the county became more thickly settled, villages appeared, for the great distance to shopping centers, and the condition of the roads made it imperative for the farmers to have the means of getting supplies close at hand.

Some of the first settlers in the county located at what is now Clintonville. The community was first called Indigo Head, because there was so much indigo growing

there.⁶ One of the first voting precincts in Coffee County was created at Indigo Head in 1845.⁷ The village continued to grow until in 1850 the population was around two hundred. This figure could be matched only by Elba. It was a great blow to the citizens of Indigo Head in 1852, when Elba, instead of their village, was selected to become the county seat.

The name of the town was changed from Indigo Head to Clintonville in 1859. Why the name was changed or why Clintonville was selected is not known. The town had prospered through the 1850's and on January 11, 1860, a post office was established there. John A. Fleming was the first post master. During the period there existed in the town eight stores, a blacksmith shop, and two churches, one Methodist, the other Baptist.

The legislature on January 11, 1860, granted a charter to the Clintonville Male and Female Academy.⁸ This was the first academy in the county, and thus Clintonville became the cultural and educational center of the county and remained so for a number of years.

6. Letters, written by W. A. Edwards, filed under Coffee County in Archives Department, Montgomery.

7. Acts of the Alabama Legislature (1844-45), p. 76.

8. Ibid., (1859-60), p. 602.

Some of the pioneer families of Clintonville were the Flemings, Hutchensons, Marshes, Sawyers, Goyens, and Carmichaels.⁹

Elba had its economic beginning with the establishment of a ferry across Pea River between what is now Claxton and Polk Streets. The ferry was established by a Mr. McLane. The exact date of the building of the ferry is not known, but it is believed it was in the early 1830's.¹⁰

The land on which Elba is located was entered by Ephraim King on February 17, 1836. About the year 1840, King sold his holdings to John B. Simmons and his brother-in-law, Cappa T. Yelverton.

Simmons and Yelverton organized the Simmons Mercantile Company, which was the first store in Elba. For many years, the post office was located in their store building and Mr. Simmons served as postmaster. They called the town Bentonville in honor of Colonel Thomas Hart Benton, Senator from Missouri, who won the favor of Alabama in the Creek War of 1813-14, serving in Alabama and commanding Fort Montgomery.

With the growth of the town, the citizens of Bentonville thought the name should be changed to one more fitting for a thriving community. The name was changed in 1846 by placing different names in a hat and drawing. Each person

9. Letters, written by W. A. Edwards, filed under Coffee County in Archives Department, Montgomery.

10. Carnley, op. cit.,

present could submit one name. John B. Simmons who had been reading a biography of Napoleon Bonaparte containing reference to the island to which he was first banished, placed the name of Elba in the hat. Elba was drawn. In 1852 when by act of the state legislature a voting precinct was created the new name was officially recognized.¹¹

In 1852, after Elba was selected to be the county seat, the town was moved back from the river one-half mile. The town in its new location was planned with the streets leading from the court house square. Most of the streets were named for the leading citizens. Claxton, Yelverton, Cor - dellia, Addison, as well as Court and Polk Streets, run north and south. Davis, Collier, Simmons, and Buford Streets, as well as Putnam Street, run east and west. On May 7, 1853, an election was held and the people voted to incorporate the town.¹²

Another community, in time named Victoria, was first settled in the early 1830's. The village itself was never very large, but was the center of a relatively thickly settled farming district. This community for some years bore the appellation Smut Eye. A story persists that the men of the settlement would gather outside of J. C. Brown's place of business and in cold weather would build a fire.

11. Acts of the Alabama Legislature (1851-52), p. 55

12. Carnley, op. cit.

Mr. or Mrs. Brown, or both, apparently had rules against drinking in their house. After spending several hours around the open fire talking and drinking, the men's faces would be coated with smut. Someone remarked that the men of the community always had smut around their eyes. The name stuck and the community is still sometimes referred to as Smut Eye.

Some of the people were incensed over the name applied to their community, however, and wanted a more appropriate name chosen. A movement was started by some of the young men in the late 1850's or early 1860's to change the name to Victoria, to honor a Miss "Vick" Winslow, then the belle of the community. This was satisfactory with everyone, but for a long time the new name was seldom used. The story goes that Miss Winslow was highly flattered at the honor and would correct anyone who used the old name of Smut Eye.

Miss Winslow is said to have owned the first piano in Coffee County. It was brought from Montgomery on a wagon in the late 1850's. The piano attracted people from miles around, who came to see and hear it, for it was an oddity and the people were curious.¹³

Victoria never developed into a town, but remained through the years simply a rural community center.

Many centers of population which were prominent before

13. Letters, written by W. A. Edwards, filed under Coffee County in Archives Department, Montgomery.

the Civil War have disappeared or their names have been changed. In 1860, post offices were located at Geneva, Henderson's Store, Rocky Head, Haw Ridge, and Victoria, besides Clintonville and Elba.¹⁴ In the election of 1859, boxes were located at the following places: Elba, Danally, Coffee Corner, Tilmon's Mill, Simmons Mill, Smut Eye, Indigo Head, Haw Ridge, Grant, Wellborn, Geneva, Flat Creek, Old Town, and Rushing.¹⁵

Public education in Coffee County as in other frontier communities lagged. There were 666 people in Coffee County in 1850 who were illiterate. This was 32.58 per cent of the people twenty years old or older. Nine of the illiterates were foreign born, this figure representing seventy-five per cent of the total foreign born. It is interesting in view of the legal prohibition against educating slaves that two of the free persons of color in the county were literate.¹⁶

There were no public funds for the support of schools, consequently education was irregular and of poor quality. The people in a community, who were interested in educating their children, would build a school house and hire a teacher. These schools were supported by charging a small fee to clients and by private donations. There was no central

14. Unpublished census returns for 1860.

15. Taken from the election returns in the Department of Archives and History.

16. Seventh Census of the United States (1850).

agency for hiring teachers, and no particular qualifications were established as prerequisites to teaching. Teachers of any kind were scarce and the board of a local school would hire an itinerant teacher with no information as to his qualifications but the candidate's assertion that he could handle the job. The school houses were very crude, usually being a typical frontier one room log building without glass windows.

There were seventeen schools in the county in 1850, and all of them were one teacher schools. The published census for 1850 gives the number of pupils enrolled in these schools as 290, but the number of children attending school as returned by families were 712. The schools probably reported the average attendance, while parents reported a child attending school if he went for only a few days. Accepting the larger figure of 712, this was only 30.76 per cent of the 2,314 people between five and twenty years of age. The total income for the seventeen schools was \$3,480 per year. This money all came from private sources, and averages only \$205.00 per school.¹⁷ The shortage of money caused the teacher's salaries to be very low and the school term short.

The state educational system was organized in the 1830's and provided for a county superintendent of education. J. G. Moore was the first person to hold that office in

17. Ibid.

Coffee County. He was elected in the general election of 1853.¹⁸ The superintendent received no salary and acted only in an advisory capacity to the local school boards.

Until 1860 there was not a school in the county above the elementary level, but on January 11, 1860, as noted above, the legislature granted a charter to the Clintonville Male and Female Academy. The trustees of the new school were Alfred McGee, John A. Fleming, William E. Watson, Asa R. Doolin, J. G. Moore, Lewis Hutchinson, Jr., and A. B. Brook.¹⁹ The trustees of the academy were granted the power to erect buildings, elect a president, and do the other things which were necessary to the operation of a boarding school. The school house, as completed in 1860, was a two story frame building painted white. The first head of the school was W. A. Edwards, who owned a plantation in Dale County. Edwards rented his plantation and leased his slaves, so he would be free to devote full time to the Academy.

For the first term, 1860, Edwards had four teachers serving under him and an enrollment of around two hundred students. The Clintonville Academy was described by a contemporary as the best and the longest term school in any of the adjoining counties. Edwards was followed as principal

18. From the original election returns filed in the Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery.

19. Acts of the Alabama Legislature (1859-60), p. 508

by J. J. Johnson, J. M. Sanders, and J. J. Langham.²⁰

The early settlers were basically religious and brought their faiths with them to their new homes, and expressed their faith by building churches in each community. The religious field from the beginning has been largely pre-empted by the Baptists and Methodists, though there have always been people of other faiths.

The religious impulse of the people was such that by 1850 there were twenty-three churches in the county. The Presbyterians had one organized church and the Baptists and Methodists had eleven each.²¹ These included Primitive Baptists, "Hardshell" Baptists, Methodist Episcopal, and Methodist Protestant churches.

The twenty-three churches had aggregate accommodations for 4,375 people. The fact that there were seats for three-fourths of the population, including the negroes is significant. The slaves did not have their own churches but usually some part of the churches of the whites were set aside for them. In some cases the Baptists and Methodists have used the same building for services, but were organized separately. Even today some church buildings in the county serve two denominations.

The Presbyterian church was valued at \$125.00, and the

20. Letters, written by J. A. Edwards, filed under Coffee County in Archives Department, Montgomery.

21. Seventh Census of the United States (1850).

Baptists and Methodists each valued their eleven buildings at a total of \$1,375.²² The average cost of the twenty-three church buildings in the county was \$125.00. The people were poor and did not try to build pretentious buildings, nor did they try to outdo each other in building attractive churches. Most of the buildings were unimaginative frame buildings rectangular in shape. The insides of the buildings were very plain; the plank seats were uncomfortable, often having wide cracks in them.

There were nine ministers in the county in 1850 as reported by the United States census for that year. Five were Methodist, three were Baptist and one was Presbyterian.²³

Services were held monthly at most churches, with services on Saturdays and Sundays. In the summer, after crops were laid by, a revival meeting would be held in each church for a week or more. This practice is still prevalent in the churches today.

By 1860, the number of churches in the county had increased to forty-seven. The Presbyterians had two organized churches, the Baptists twenty-eight, and the Methodists seventeen. The average value of the church buildings was then only \$105.00. There were a total of twelve ministers for the county. Six were Baptist, five were Methodist and

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24

one was Presbyterian.

In the typical frontier condition that existed in Coffee County in the 1840's and the 1850's, living was very crude. In clearing their farms the settlers had made only a dent in the forests. Homes were set in small clearings. Within these clearings were also corn cribs, lean-tos for the farm animals, and sometimes houses for slaves.

Most of the houses were constructed of logs with hand hewn boards used as shingles for a roof. Often mud was used to fill the cracks between the logs. Glass windows were rare, and most of the houses only had wooden shutters opened to the outside. The chimneys were often made of mud thatched with sticks which sometimes would catch fire. Porches were customary and there was often one across the front and another in the rear part of the house.

The furnishings of the homes were as crude as the houses. Most of the furniture was home-made, of rough materials. A bed would be made in a corner of a room with the wall forming three of the bed posts. Ropes were used to bottom chairs which were home-made and pegged together. Benches were provided extensively for the children to use at the table. Cooking on the open hearth was still prevalent in the 1840's and 1850's but stoves were beginning to be used in the latter decade.

The spinning wheel and the loom occupied an important

24. Eighth census of the United States (1860).

place in the home. The women made practically all of the clothes for the entire family. This was one of the heavy burdens frontier women bore.

The people bought very little food for they raised most of what was needed. Coffee and salt were two of the things which it was necessary to import. The farmers' swine, cattle, and chickens furnished the family with meat, and could be supplemented by wild game which was plentiful. Vegetables of almost any kind flourished and the winters were so mild that some things would grow the year round. Meal bread was prevalent. For sweetening, there was molasses made from locally grown cane. In the spring and summer, the woods abounded with berries, nuts, wild grapes, and other edibles. All but the most tropical of fruits could be produced, and most of the homes had an orchard full of fig, pomegranate, peach, pear, and other fruit trees, besides an arbor for a scuppernon or muscadine vine.

There was not very much in the way of recreation to occupy the people's leisure time. For the men there was hunting and fishing; shooting matches were a common occurrence with turkeys or other prizes given to the winner. There is no extant evidence of gander-pulling or horse racing, but cock-fighting may have been engaged in on occasions. Apparently there was little emphasis on organized sports. Greivous desires were too often restricted to loitering in the villages or around the stores of country stores.

There was nevertheless a spirit of community interest as is indicated by neighborhood assistance of farm folk in their more strenuous activities. When a farmer had work to do which required outside labor he would ask his neighbors for help. The heavy work of rolling logs off a newly cleared field, or of raising a new house or barn, was quickly done and mutual satisfaction resulted from the community undertaking.

Life was more monotonous for the women than for the men for they had more work to do, and were tied more closely at home. If they had neighbors close enough, visits were exchanged and they would converse while they sewed or knitted or quilted. Women's hands were seldom idle. Too many people were dependent upon their products.

On Saturday, there was shopping to be done, and so often the whole family would make the trip to town. H. A. Agee, on his trip through the county, was in Elba on Saturday when court was in session. He commented upon the large crowd in town and the attraction the proceedings of the court, which was held in a woodshop, had for the people.²⁵

Doubtless one reason for the emphasis on things religious was the fact that church attendance was as much a social event as it was an ecclesiastical function. Before and after services the men would talk farming and politics while

25. The Montgomery Advertiser, July 19, 1909.

the women conversed. The young people used these meetings at church to make friends and further courtships. Particularly the revivals in the summer were a boon for the young people. The meetings were held after crops had been "laid-by", that is, after the final hoeing had been done and before harvest time. These revival meetings ordinarily lasted a week, and if more than one church was within commuting distance than that circumstance provided opportunity for increased pleasure and social intercourse.

The young people found relaxation in giving parties which often took the form of a "wood sawing and candy drawing" or some other combination of work and pleasure. Local fiddlers furnished music for square dancing which was engaged in by both young and old. Festivals or box-suppers at the schools or churches offered other opportunities for relaxation and amusement.

Life was crude, but the people appear to have been satisfied to continue living in their own narrow orbit. The people were not prepared for the shock of war or for the sacrifices that come with war. They wished to be left alone, and could see nothing in their way of life for others to object to or wish to change. Some of them did not understand the legal arguments of secession or states' right, but were willing to fight for those things, for they saw in the attacks upon these beliefs an attack upon their homes.

CHAPTER III

THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

Agriculture

The first permanent settlers in Coffee County came there to farm, as did most of those who followed. It has already been shown that these people settled on the flat land along streams. They chose the river lands because they thought the open pine land on the ridges was not productive. Actually, most of the land along the streams was poor and unproductive for cotton; it was marshy and heavily dotted with small lakes that were not drained until after the close of the Civil War.¹

Most of the settlers were poor and did not have the money to buy large tracts of land. Neither did they have the large numbers of slaves which were considered necessary in the production of cotton. These two things combined with the unproductivity of the soil caused the farmers, in the early years of the county, to turn their main efforts toward the raising of cattle and hogs.

Animals were not only raised for home use, but were one of the farmers largest sources of income. In 1850 there were 40,340 farm animals in the county valued at \$183,220; by 1860 the number of animals had increased to 43,270 and their

1. Karl Shafer, A Basis for Social Planning in Coffee County, Alabama, p. 2.

overall value was \$392,032.²

A large number of animals were slaughtered each year for home use. In the year ending June 1, 1850, the value of the animals slaughtered was \$49,083, and for the year ending June 1, 1860, their value was \$104,482. The following table gives the farm animals by classification for 1850 and 1860:

FARM ANIMALS

<u>Species</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>
Horses	1,054	1,264
Mules	112	523
Milch cows	4,063	4,435
Working oxen	716	210
Other cattle	11,885	9,294
Sheep	2,744	3,685
Swine	20,266	23,859

There was an increase of only 2,430 animals from 1850 to 1860. The number of beef cattle declined, but the number of milch cows increased by 372. This was an increase of only 9.15 per cent in the number of milch cows, whereas, the population increased sixty-two per cent in the same period. There was a big change in type of working stock;

2. Seventh Census of the United States (1850),
Eighth Census of the United States (1860). In view of the fact that all the figures on agriculture, property, and manufacturing in the chapter are based upon compilations transcribed from this material, footnote references are hereafter excluded to other materials examined.

the number of oxen declined; but the number of horses and mules increased. The total number of working stock increased only 115 or 8.11 per cent. Except for somewhat higher prices for farm animals (\$34.37 per capita for free persons in 1850 to \$47.77 in 1860) the people were actually growing poorer in stock. Whereas, in 1850 there were 7.59 animals per free person, in 1860 the figure stood at 5.27.

The citizens of Coffee County were not, then, raising animals as a source of cash revenue.³ If they were to seek a cash income they must turn to other enterprises.

The farm production for the years ending June 1, 1850 and June 1, 1860, is shown in the following table:

3. This is at variance with the thesis advanced by Shafer. Shafer maintained that cattle was the major source of income until 1830.

FARM PRODUCTION

	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>
Wheat, bushels	1,731	523
Oats , bushels	6,014	2,503
Indian Corn, bushels	136,610	237,322
Rice , pounds	85,863	1,721
Wool , pounds	4,120	3,292
Peas and Beans, bushels	9,251	33,141
Sweet Potatoes, bushels	51,339	78,337
Butter, pounds	24,543	33,995
Cheese, pounds	916	1,000
Cane Sugar, pounds	3,000	
Molasses, gallons	6,953	3,483
Beeswax and Honey, pounds	19,394	8,577
Rye, bushels	22	70
Tobacco, pounds	785	229
Irish Potatoes, bushels	88	892
Barley, bushels	20	60
Wine, gallons	70	10
Canned cotton, bales of 400 pounds each	1,403	5,294

In 1860, the diversification of the agriculture is noted, but by 1860 the swing is toward staple crops. Except for cane sugar the same things were being produced but in different proportions.⁴ One-half of the products listed increased

⁴. Sugar doubtless was being produced but in what quantity is not known.

in production, but cotton led the list with an increase of 275 per cent. The price of cotton in 1850 was 12.55 cents per pound.⁵ This represented a sales cash value of \$13.13 per free person. In 1860, with cotton selling for 15.27 cents per pound⁶ the value of Coffee County's production per free person had reached \$34.26. The next largest crop was Indian corn which saw an 89 per cent increase in 1860 over that of 1850. Wheat production in the 1850's dwindled to a mere pittance. The Coffee County farmers in the late antebellum period, then, were beginning to concentrate upon cotton and the products necessary in a cotton economy. As was true throughout the South "king cotton" was the money crop.

As an adjunct to cotton culture the labor supply was augmented by a 128 per cent increase in the number of slaves. Furthermore, roads were improved, making it easier to get the cotton to market. The produce leaving the county and supplies coming in were hauled by wagon from Montgomery or came by boat up the Choctawhatchee River from Pensacola to Geneva, and were distributed from there to other points in the county.⁷

5. Minnie Clare Boyd, Alabama in the Fifties; a Social Study, p. 38

6. Ibid., p. 39.

7. Boyd, op. cit., p. 92

In 1850, there were 61,253 acres of farm land, and the average size farm was 89 acres. There were 123,181 acres of farm land in 1860, and the average farm contained 148 acres. Most of the farmers owned small farms; there were very few large holdings, and no plantations such as those held in the black-belt to the north. The following table shows the distribution of the farms as to size in 1860:

<u>Acres</u>	<u>Number of farms</u>
3 and under 10	6
10 and under 20	70
20 and under 50	357
50 and under 100	206
100 and under 500	136
500 and under 1000	4

The farmers owned in addition to the land, farm machinery and implements valued in 1850 at \$30,042, and in 1860, at \$41,228.

Property

The only property reported by the census enumerator in 1850 was real estate. There were 61,253 acres of farm land; 24,820 acres were improved and the remaining 36,433 acres were unimproved. The total monetary evaluation of all real estate was \$232,001. The average value of real estate, including land and buildings, was \$3.79 per acre. There were 890 heads of white families and three heads of free colored

families, making a total of 393 free families. There was an average of 65.39 acres of farm land per family valued at \$259.80.

The total reported wealth in 1860 was \$5,439,979. The overall value of the real estate was \$1,191,542., and the value of the personal estates \$2,248,437. Land was still plentiful and therefore very cheap, but slaves were expensive, and it was their value which caused the personal estate to be valued higher than the real estate.

In 1860, the 56,612 acres of improved farm land, and 66,569 acres of unimproved farm land were valued at \$1,004,062. The average value per acre of the farm land, including the improvements, was \$8.13; this was an increase of 115 per cent over that of 1850. There were 977 farmers who owned an average of 126 acres of land, valued at \$1026.90.

The wealth of the people, as reported by the census enumerator, increased greatly from 1850 to 1860. In 1850, the per capita value of all real estate was \$43.12. An increase of 237 per cent raised this figure to \$145.31 in 1860. The average real estate holding per family in 1850 was \$259.80, while for 1860 it was \$266.57.

The average wealth for each of the 1,375 white families in 1860 was \$2,501.80. The per capita wealth for the total white population was \$419.50. This does not compare favorably with figures for other segments of the American people. The national per capita wealth of free Americans in 1860

was \$887.84; for free Alabamians it was \$935.96.⁸

This was a country of relatively poor small home owners. There were only forty-two people who had estates valued at more than \$10,000. The largest of these estates, valued at \$37,000, was owned by Thomas G. Frazier. The value of the next largest estate was only \$40,000. Thirty of the forty-two men who owned estates valued at more than \$10,000 were farmers, six were merchants, four were physicians, one was a lawyer and one gave his occupation as Judge of Probate.

Occupations

Coffee county was primarily a farming section, but there are certain services for which a farmer has to depend upon skilled artisans. The people who did not farm were dependent upon farming for their livelihood, for the whole economy was built around agriculture.

Farming on a larger scale and the number of farmers increased from 1850 to 1860, but the percentage of the employed people engaged in non-agricultural pursuits increased. In 1850, there were 666 farmers, which was only 75.42 per cent of the employed people, whereas, in 1860, there were 977 farmers which was only 70.39 per cent of the employed people. Conversely non-farming occupation increased from 24.58 per cent of employment to 29.61. As the country opened up, population increased, and the villages grew; there

8. Williams, op. cit.

was a greater demand for supplies and services, and merchants and artisans appeared to do the job.

The occupations of the people, and the number and per cent of the employed at each, are shown in the following table:⁹

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>1850</u>		<u>1880</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
Farmers	666	75.42	977	70.39
Laborers	83	9.63	179	12.90
Mechanics	35	3.96	40	2.88
Merchants	27	3.06	47	3.39
Blacksmiths	13	1.47	15	1.08
Teachers	9	1.02	15	1.08
Ministers	9	1.02	12	.86
Millers	7	.79	9	.65
Shoemakers	7	.79	9	.65
Physicians	6	.68	15	1.08
Clerks	5	.57	14	1.01
Lawyers	2	.23	6	.43
Miscellaneous	12	1.36	50	3.60
Totals	883	100.00	1388	100.00

9. Tabulation based upon photographic reproductions of the manuscript sheets of the United States Census enumerators for Alabama in 1850 and 1880, University of Alabama Library.

Manufacturing

In 1850, there were not any manufacturing establishments which were organized as such, but manufacturing was done on a small scale by some of the mills and shops. There were nine millers who, with the use of water power, ground the locally grown grain into flour and meal. The farm implements were very crude, and many of them were made by the thirteen local blacksmiths. The local tailors, shoemakers, chair makers, hatters, and seamstresses also did manufacturing on a small scale.

Most of the manufacturing, however, was done by the women in the home. The total value of the homemade products in 1850 was \$25,406,¹⁰ but by 1860 this figure had declined slightly to \$26,236.¹¹ Thread, cloth, and finished clothes made from the locally grown wool and cotton comprised most of this value. Mattresses and quilts were other articles made at home.

By 1860, the milling, blacksmithing, tailoring, and other types of establishments discussed above were operating on a larger scale and organized industry had made a start. There were six establishments in the county, in 1860, which were classified as manufacturing. There was one carriage making business, one produced boots and shoes, and four sawed

10. Seventh Census of the United States (1850).

11. Eighth Census of the United States (1860).

lumber.

The four lumber companies had a capital investment of \$13,850, and the produced lumber, for the year ending June 1, 1880, was worth \$16,000. The companies during the year paid out \$2,244 in wages to the thirteen people employed. The raw materials used cost them \$7,400, leaving an income of \$6,356.¹²

The carriage maker had \$500 invested in his business and spent the same amount for raw materials each year. He hired two men as helpers which annually cost him \$523. His produced goods were worth only \$1,570, which, after the cost of raw materials and labor were subtracted, left him an income of but \$542.¹³

The boot and shoe maker also operated on a small scale, as he only had \$200 capital invested. He had one helper employed who cost him \$300 yearly. He paid out \$238 each year for raw materials, while the goods produced each year were valued at \$320. Subtracting the cost of raw materials and labor leaves the owner an income of only \$284, which is less than he paid his helper.¹⁴

The laborers, or those hired to do skilled or semi-skilled work, received very low wages. The sixteen men employed in the six businesses discussed above were paid only

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

\$3.072 as wages. This is an average of only \$192 per man. The skilled workers received somewhat more than those employed at the lumber mills. The helper in the boot and shoe shop received \$300 per year, and the two hired men in the carriage making establishment received an average of \$264, while those hired by the lumber industry averaged only \$172.61 per year.

The legislature on January 3, 1852, granted a charter to the Elba Manufacturing Company.¹⁵ The firm was incorporated and Cary Curry, Hosea Holley, Gappa T. Yelverton, J. E. Adkison, William Spears, John Cravey, William Holley, and Noah Carroll were the first directors of the new business. The directors were to issue stock not to exceed \$50,000, and divided into shares of \$250 each. The corporation could engage in sawing, grinding, and manufacturing, for sale or use, articles of cotton, wood, iron, or earth. The location of the business, as set forth in the charter, was to be at the falls of White Water Creek near Elba.

The fate of the corporation is not known, but it was operating in 1859. On November 4, 1859, the Elba Manufacturing Company had an advertisement in The Southern Advertiser of Troy. Cured lumber of all kinds was offered to the public at what they stated was the lowest prices of any

15. Acts of the Alabama Legislature (1851-52), p. 272.

lumber company in the section.¹⁶

16. The Southern Advertiser, Troy, Alabama,
November 4, 1859. No reference to this establishment appears
in the U. S. census records of 1860.

CHAPTER IV

ANTEBELLUM POLITICS

Local and State Elections

In the antebellum period, despite the fact that cattle raising was not an increasing enterprise in Coffee County, Southeast Alabama as a whole became known to the rest of the state as the "cow country."¹ The apparent unproductivity of the soil, the lack of transportation, and the impoverished condition of the meager population, caused the term to be applied at first contemptuously. In that economic circumstances usually govern one's political affiliation it might be presumed that this "cow country" was solidly within the Democratic fold. Such did not hold completely true of Coffee County in the Antebellum period. It was usually Democratic but there was also a strong Whiggish undercurrent, which at least twice (1848 and 1853) became dominant.

There is no extant knowledge that party issues played a part in the local elections in Coffee.² The first county officers elected in 1843 were: William Peoples, Sheriff; Bartley M. Tucker, Clerk of the Circuit Court; Benjamin P.

1. Albert B. Moore, History of Alabama, p. 521.

2. Party affiliations of any officials of this period has not been ascertained.

Tucker, Clerk of the County Court; and James Claxton, Judge of the County Court.³

In 1844, Henry Adams replaced the first sheriff, William Peoples, who had resigned. Adams served until August 8, 1845, when he resigned and was replaced by Newson Tamiton. Joseph Anderson was elected to succeed Benjamin F. Tucker as Clerk of the County Court, and Wiley L. Armstrong replaced Bartly M. Tucker as Clerk of the Circuit Court.⁴ This year also the constables and justices of the peace were elected in the beats.

Coffee County voted with Dale until the election of 1845, when Coffee had been assigned one representative, and put in the twenty seventh senatorial district with Pike.⁵ In the election that year Abraham Warren (Democrat) was elected representative. Warren had served three terms in the legislature as representative from Dale, but his home was in the part of Dale which became Coffee. James J. Kendrick, a Democrat from Coffee, was elected to represent Coffee and Pike in the senate.⁶

In the election of 1847, Lewis Hutcheson, a Democrat

3. Owen, op. cit., Vol. I., p. 297.

4. Civil Register of County Officers, Vol. III., p. 126.

5. Acts of the Alabama Legislature (1844-45), p. 79.

6. William Garrott, Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama, for Thirty Years, with an Appendix, p. 743

was elected senator, and Irwin Rodgers, a Democrat, was elected representative.⁷ In the election of 1849 both posts were filled by Whig candidates. Jesse O'Neal was chosen for senator, and William Holley for representative.⁸

James Claxton resigned as Judge of the County Court on January 26, 1849, and was replaced by Lorenzo A. Killican. Killican served until January 18, 1850, and was replaced by J. Hosea Calloway. Calloway had been appointed by the Governor to serve until his successor was chosen in the general election of 1850.⁹

The office of Probate Judge was held for the first time in Coffee by James Claxton, who was elected in the general election of 1850. Claxton had been one of the four commissioners appointed by the legislature, in the act of creating the county, to locate the county seat; he had also served as Judge of the County Court from 1843 to 1849. James D. McLean was elected sheriff at the same time to replace Newson Tamiton.¹⁰

In the election of 1851, Coffee's representation in the state legislature did not change. Jesse O'Neal continued

7. Ibid., p. 746.

8. Ibid., p. 746.

9. Civil Register of County Officers, Vol. III., p. 123.

10. Ibid.

as senator and William Folley as representative.¹¹

In August, 1853, an election was held for county officers. Gappa T. Yelverton (Democrat) received a majority of three hundred and thirty-three over Alfred McGee (Whig) for representative to the legislature from Coffee. The Montgomery Advertiser in 1853 referred to Yelverton as the political boss of Coffee County.¹² Abraham Warren, a former representative, ran for sheriff but was defeated by John E. Adkison. William A. Ashley, a Whig from Covington, defeated Josiah Jones, a Coffee Democrat, in the race for senator from the third district.¹³

In the election of 1855, William A. Ashley was re-elected senator from the third district, but A. L. Willigan (Democrat) replaced Gappa T. Yelverton as representative. In the race for County Superintendent of Education, J. G. Moore defeated James Claxton, who had served as Probate Judge from 1850 to 1855. Pierre D. Costello won easily over James J. Blair and William J. Stephens in the race for Probate Judge. This election was conducted by J. W. Helms,

11. Levey Dorman, Party Politics in Alabama from 1850 through 1860, p. 170

12. The Montgomery Advertiser, January 15, 1853.

13. From the original election returns filed in the Alabama Department of Archives and History.

Shepp Riffin, and John Q. Gillis as managers and John E. Adkison, Sheriff.¹⁴

The new Probate Judge, P. D. Costello, was born in Dublin, Ireland; he came to New York while a child and was educated in the New York public schools. At the age of sixteen, he went to the Mexican War and served on the U. S. S. Porpoise. After being discharged, he came to Alabama, and served a short time as Probate Judge of Conecuh County, although he was only nineteen years of age. Later he moved to Geneva and in the early fifties to Elba. He studied law and was admitted to the bar, but because of his official duties never engaged in private practice.¹⁵

Jeremiah Warren, a Democrat, was elected as representative from Coffee in 1857, and Daniel H. Horn (Whig) was elected senator. Both men were reelected in 1859.¹⁶

On August 8, 1859, was held the last election for county officers in the antebellum period. In this election Levi D. Eyland was elected Tax Collector and William Sanford was elected Tax Assessor.¹⁷

In the election for governor the candidates for the Democrat Party carried Coffee County by large majorities in each election. The Whig Party did not get as much support

14. Ibid.

15. Carnley, op. cit.

16. Dorman, op. cit., p. 176

17. The Civil Register of County Officers, Vol. III., p. 126.

for their candidates in the state elections as they did in those for president and Congressman. The total number of votes cast for Democratic candidates for governor in the ten year period, 1849-1859, were 2,042, while the candidates for all other parties received only six hundred and fifty-eight votes.¹³

National Elections

The Democratic Party in Alabama had its greatest strength in the mountainous and hilly counties of the central and northeastern parts of the state. The greatest strength of the Whigs was in the blackbelt and in the Tennessee Valley. In the counties which fringed the black-belt on the north and in the counties of southeastern Alabama, the strength of the two parties was so evenly matched as to furnish fighting ground for the two parties. It was in these two groups of counties that most of the political changes occurred in the early fifties. Both parties had strong leadership in these sections and the party contests there were usually closely and warmly contested.

The issues which separated the Whigs and Democrats in Alabama were not always clearly defined. Both parties believed in the protection of Southern Rights from Northern aggression, although they differed in the methods of opposing the aggression of the enemies of the South, and in

13. Dorman, op. cit., pp. 160 - 192.

the degree to which the opposition should be carried. Local factors, such as physical features, the transportation facilities, and common economic interests, all these, caused sectional conditions and party changes. Origin of the early settlers, too, provided political considerations.

The most important Congressional district in Alabama was the Montgomery district, which included four black-belt counties and five "cow counties", including Coffee. From 1847 to 1853 a Whig was sent to Congress, but from 1853 on the Democrats were dominant. In 1854, Montgomery, Macon, and Russell Counties were taken from the district and without the Whig vote of those counties the district became strongly Democratic.

Coffee County, in the antebellum period, voted Democratic in all but one Congressional election. From 1847 through 1853, while the district was represented by Whigs, (Henry W. Hilliard from 1847 to 1851 and J. Abercrombie from 1851 to 1853) Coffee voted Democratic; but in 1853 the district went Democratic, while Coffee gave the Whig candidate a majority of ninety. From 1853 to 1860 Coffee reverted to her traditional stand and voted Democratic. The total number of votes cast for Congressman in the ten year period, 1849-1859, were 2,430, while the candidates for all other parties received only 1,110.¹⁹

19. IBID., pp. 180 - 192.

In the presidential election of 1844, the six counties²⁰ in southeast Alabama gave James K. Polk, the Democratic candidate, 83.66 per cent of the total vote. Coffee County voters cast 68.93 per cent of their ballots for the Democrat. Henry Clay, the Whig candidate only received 41.02 per cent of the votes cast in the state, but he received 46.32 per cent of the votes in southeast Alabama.²¹ The Whig Party, as shown by this election, was stronger in south Alabama than in the state as a whole, but not in Coffee County where the Democratic nominee received a larger vote than in the surrounding counties.

Then, four years later, in the election of 1848 Coffee County went Whig. Apparently all of southeast Alabama was strongly influenced by the powerful Whig faction in the black-belt. The chief issue in this election appears to have been the personalities of the candidates. A 52.46 per cent majority of the voters in Coffee preferred Zachary Taylor, a hero of the Mexican War. Lewis Cass, the Democratic candidate, received the other 47.54 per cent. Cass carried only one county in southeast Alabama. He received only 44.80 per cent of the votes of the district. But he

20. In the study of national politics the counties of Perry, Dale, Pike, Covington, and Conecuh are used with Coffee to show how the vote of the section compares with the state vote.

21. Williams, op. cit.

carried the state over Taylor due to the preponderance of Democratic votes in other sections of the state.²²

In the presidential election of 1862, Coffee reversed the stand taken for the Whig Party in 1848 and gave Franklin Pierce, the Democratic nominee, a large majority. Pierce received 64.10 per cent of the state vote, and carried every county in southeast Alabama. Winfield Scott, the Whig candidate received 35.90 per cent of the state vote but only 32.10 per cent of the voters in Coffee voted the Whig ticket.²³ The fight over the extension of slavery into the western territories had developed into a party fight, and people supported the Democratic Party because of its stand for the extension of slavery. Coffee went Democratic by 67.90 per cent, the second largest majority to that date.

The failure of the Whig Party to run a candidate for president in 1856 did not cause all of the voters of Coffee to vote for the Democratic candidate, James Buchanan. Millard Fillmore, running on the ticket for the American Party, received three hundred and one out of a total vote of one thousand and four. The Democratic candidate received 62.08 per cent of the total vote for the state, but received 70.02 per cent of the votes in Coffee County.²⁴

Only Abraham Lincoln, of the four candidates for presi-

22. Ibid.

23. Dorman, op. cit., p. 176.

24. Williams, op. cit.

dent in 1860, received no votes in Coffee County. Lincoln's Party, the Republican, was a sectional party and the platform was worded to win votes in the North. The people of the South objected to the policies of the Republican Party and to Lincoln personally for his views on slavery and particularly his objection to the extension of slavery in the territories.

The voters in 1860 not only ignored the Republican Party, but voted for the party of the other extreme, the State Rights Democrat. Stephen A. Douglas, a Northern Democrat, received only two votes; John Bell, nominee for the constitutional Union Party, which was the moderate party in this election, received three hundred and four votes; but John C. Breckinridge, a State Rights Democrat, received eight hundred and seventy-eight votes.²⁵

By their vote in the presidential election of 1860, the voters of Coffee County, by almost one hundred per cent, committed themselves as unalterably opposed to the anti-slavery program. Over sixty-one per cent of the voters supported the candidates of the State Rights Party, a party whose leaders were talking secession should Lincoln and the Republicans be elected.

25. Ibid.

Secession

Discontent with the policies of the Federal Government had been growing in Coffee County, as it had in the rest of Alabama and the South. Most of the families did not own slaves but could not stomach the thoughts of emancipation and its complements. Although only thirty-nine per cent voted for the Constitutional Union Party this does not mean that the majority necessarily desired separation from the Union. But it does indicate that a majority determined to support slavery and what they believed were their rights under the Constitution, even though such a course might lead to secession and war.

On February 24, 1860, the Alabama Legislature resolved that the state would not submit to a sectional party, and gave the Governor power to call a convention in the event a Republican president should be elected. After the election of Abraham Lincoln, Governor Andrew B. Moore issued the call for a convention and the election for delegates was held on December 24, 1860.²⁶ The secessionist candidate in Coffee County, Gappa T. Yelverton, received a large majority. The total vote cast was 1073, with the Cooperationist Candidate receiving 359, and the Secessionist the remaining 714.²⁷ Over sixty-six per cent of the people who voted in Coffee were now for immediate secession, whereas, in the state as a

26. Owen, op. cit., Vol. I., p. 371.

27. Dorman, op. cit., p. 36.

whole only fifty-six per cent of the votes cast were for secessionist candidates.

The convention met on January 7, 1861, and on January 11, voted to secede from the Union by a vote of sixty-one to thirty-nine. Cappa T. Yelverton, the delegate from Coffee County, voted for secession. The state Constitution was rewritten to take care of the new changes, and the convention adjourned on March 21, 1861, after ratifying the Constitution of the Confederate States.²⁸

Here then was one of the poorest elements of southern society, not led by war-mongering planters (of whom it had few, if any) voting by a far larger majority than that expressed in the rich black-belt, for preservation of the institution of slavery even to the extent of secession and almost inevitable warfare. This fact is in contradiction to the widely held thesis that the antebellum planter dominated politics. Rather, it is an indication of the fear of the poor whites that they be placed in legal equality and surely in economic and perhaps even social competition with the blacks. This they could not and would not tolerate.

28. Owen, op. cit., Vol. I., p. 372.

CHAPTER V

COFFEE COUNTY DURING THE CIVIL WAR Military Contribution to the Confederacy

Coffee County contributed her part of the men for the Confederate Armies. The first company to become part of a combat unit was the "Coffee Rangers," which became Company D of the Twelfth Alabama Infantry at Richmond, Virginia in July, 1861. The main battles in which the Regiment was engaged and the captains who commanded Company D are as follows:¹

<u>MAIN BATTLES</u>	<u>CAPTAINS</u>
Yorktown	John O. Brown; promoted to major and resigned.
Williamsburg	
Malvern Hill	T. C. Horn; resigned.
Boonsboro	E. Tucker; killed at Sharpsburg.
Sharpsburg	. . . Davis; killed at Gettysburg.
Chancellorsville	
Gettysburg	J. McCassells; killed at the Wilderness.
Wilderness	
Spottsylvania	
Petersburg	

At the end of the war the Regiment surrendered at Appomattox.²

1. The number of men from Coffee County who served in the Confederate Armies has never been tabulated. The regimental rosters are in the Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery.

2. Brewer, op. cit., p. 185

The "Bullock Guards" from Coffee County became Company A of the Eighteenth Alabama Infantry upon the organization of that regiment at Auburn, Alabama, September 4, 1861.

MAIN BATTLES

CAPTAINS

Shiloh	William M. Moxley; resigned.
Chickamauga	B. W. Starke; wounded at Shiloh; resigned.
Mission Ridge	Joseph Justice; killed at Chickamauga.
Dalton - Atlanta	Noah Hutchinson.
Franklin	
Mobile	

The Eighteenth surrendered at Meridian, Mississippi,
May 4, 1865, with the military department.³

Company K of the Twenty-fifth Alabama Infantry, organized at Mobile in December, 1861, was from Coffee and Pike Counties; they called themselves "Little George Matthews' Friends."

MAIN BATTLES

Shiloh

Murfreesboro

Chickamauga

Missionary Ridge

New Hope

Atlanta

Franklin

Bentonville

CAPTAINS

D. P. Costello; wounded
at Shiloh; killed at
Murfreesboro.

Daniel C. Monroe; wounded
at Chickamauga.

The Regiment surrendered at Goldsboro, North Carolina.⁴

4. Ibid., p. 325.

Company A of the Thirty-third Alabama Infantry Regiment was from Coffee. The Regiment was organized at Pensacola, Florida, in April, 1862.

MAIN BATTLES

Perryville

Murfreesboro

Chickamauga

Atlanta

Franklin

CAPTAINS

M. C. Kimey; wounded
at Perryville.

Regimental officers from Coffee were Colonel Robert F. Crittenden, captured at Nashville; and Lieutenant Colonel Isaac E. Horn, resigned. The Thirty-third surrendered in North Carolina.⁵

5. Ibid., p. 341.

The Fifty-fourth Alabama Infantry was organized at Jackson, Mississippi, October 12, 1862. Company A and Company E were from Coffee County. The companies which formed this regiment fought for over a year above Memphis and were captured at Island Ten. They were in an exchange of prisoners made by the United States and Confederate Governments. After returning to the Confederacy, they were reorganized and put in the newly created Fifty-fourth Regiment.

MAIN BATTLES

Vicksburg

Jackson

Atlanta

Bentonville

CAPTAINS

(Co. A). I. T. Law;
captured at Island
Ten, and at Atlanta.

(Co. E). Lewis J. Laird;
captured at Island
Ten; wounded at New Hope.

Lieutenant Colonel John A. Winter of Coffee was captured at Island Ten, and was later promoted to Colonel. The regiment surrendered with the forces of General Joseph E. Johnston.⁶

The Fifty-seventh Alabama Infantry was organized at Troy in March, 1863. Company G was from Coffee, and Company D was composed of men from Pike and Coffee Counties, and Company I of men from the counties of Dale and Coffee.

MAIN BATTLES

Dalton - Atlanta

Peach-Tree Creek

Franklin

Nashville

Bentonville

CAPTAINS

Co. D:

W. R. Arnold;
promoted.

M. J. Horn

Co. G:

Jesse O'Neal;
resigned.

William O. Nixon.

Co. I:

Mordecai White;
resigned.

W. C. Yelverton.

The regiment folded its colors at Bentonville, North Carolina, at the end of the war.⁷

7. Ibid., p. 333

The Sixty-first Alabama Infantry was organized at Pollard in September, 1863. Company G of this regiment was from Coffee County.

MAIN BATTLES

Wilderness

Spottsylvania

Cold Harbor

Winchester

Petersburg

Fare's Hill

CAPTAINS

A. D. McCaskill; killed
at the Wilderness.

J. J. Joiner; killed at
Fare's Hill.

The Regiment surrendered at Appomattox, Virginia.⁸

8. Ibid., p. 673

The Sixth Alabama Cavalry was organized near Pine Level early in 1863. Company B of this regiment was from Coffee County.

MAIN BATTLES

CAPTAINS

Pollard

C. S. Lee, Jr.

Decatur

Ten Islands

Bluff Spring

The Regiment surrendered at Gainesville, Florida.⁹

The Fifty-third was a regiment of mounted infantry, which was organized at Montgomery in November, 1862.

Company H was made up of men from Coffee and Dale Counties.

MAIN BATTLES

CAPTAINS

Town Creek

J. E. P. Flournoy.

Dalton

Atlanta

The Fifty-third surrendered at Columbia, South Carolina.¹⁰

9. Ibid., p. 683.

10. Ibid., p. 683.

Life On The Home Front During The War

Life in Coffee County during 1861 and 1862 was lived at fever pitch. The long period of waiting and uncertainty was over, and the feeling of unrest passed with a job to do. Enthusiasm was high, everyone pitched in to get the men ready for war. Uniforms were made, supplies were collected and when the companies were ready to depart, there were farewell parties and the presentation of colors. The men were encouraged to fight but exhorted never to surrender.¹¹ The people were gay and the soldiers carefree. It was a custom for a military company to have a distinctive name; three of such names chosen by local companies were: "Coffee Rangers," "Bullock Guards," and "Little George Matthews' Friends."¹²

After the young men were gone, the seriousness of war was brought home to the people, and those left behind settled down to hard work and a long wait. For a long while there was no fear of invasion, and life became monotonous. Casualty lists began coming in, and it was a blessing that the people had to work so hard for constant employment was their greatest comfort.

Cotton was not the all-embracing factor in the econo-

11. Walter L. Fleming, Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama, p. 262.

12. Owen, op. cit., p. 238.

my of Coffee County that it was in some other parts of the state, so the methods of agriculture changed very little with the war. Transportation was still difficult, and the people were used to a subsistence system of farming. The Confederate and state governments encouraged, and even enforced by law, the growing of food. Cereals could not be grown in southeast Alabama, but the number of acres planted in peas, corn, peanuts, chufas, and all kinds of vegetables was increased. (3)

In the black-belt, the loss of men was not so keenly felt on the farms, for the negroes did the field labor. In the white counties, the burden fell heavily upon the women, children, and old men. Here the women did not have the responsibility of managing a plantation and large numbers of slaves, but often had to labor in the fields. The few families who owned slaves, or the ones with large children, fared well by comparison with the wife of a poor farmer or renter, left alone with small children.

The social life of the people changed little with the war; the chief difference was the predominance of women at any gathering. With the exception of the three small villages, Clintonville, Elba, and Victoria, the people lived widely scattered and any visit or party usually took long planning. Where the homes were close enough the women would get together and sew and gossip. At other times there would be "quiltings" or "spinning bees," to which the

women would come long distances and stay all day, bringing with them in wagons their wheels, cards, and cotton. The young people found relaxation by attending "corn shuckings," "candy pullings," or in giving parties for the soldiers on furlough.

A soldier, home on furlough, was visited by everyone in the community, anxious for news of someone in the Army. This was one of the main contacts soldiers had with home, for the mails were expensive and very uncertain the country districts. Due to the company system of enlistment, all men from one community might be in the same outfit, and thus messages were carried back and forth and a letter was something to be passed around for the entire company or community to read.

The people continued to operate their old businesses and to start new ones. Newsom Taunton opened the first hotel in Elba in 1861. He advertised as offering the best of lodging for man and beast. The rates at the hotel were as follows: board per month \$12.50, per week \$6.00, per day \$1.00, and \$.25 for an individual meal or for one night's lodging.¹⁵ Part of the schools closed, due to the shortage of teachers, and to the fact that the children had to work. Clintonville Academy continued to operate, but

15. The Southern Advertiser, Troy, Alabama, March 19, 1861.

had a great decrease in enrollment.¹⁴

Several of the county office-holders went into the Army. Among these was the sheriff, Mason C. Kimey, who commanded Company A of the Thirty-third Alabama Infantry until wounded at Perryville. He was followed in office by Welcome W. Flournoy, who served until May 2, 1862, and was replaced by John C. Brown, who was appointed by the Governor. Brown had been forced to resign from the Army due to wounds received while serving as captain of Company D of the Twelfth Alabama Infantry; he was promoted to major before resigning.

The Probate Judge, D. P. Costello, went into service as captain of Company X of the Twenty-fifth Alabama Infantry, but unlike the sheriff he did not resign. He left his office force and the Board of Commissioners to carry on his work. He was an able administrator and popular with the people, having been elected to the office three times. He kept as close contact as possible with the people administering his office, and it was he who determined the policies to be carried out.

There began to be some needy cases in the county early in 1862, and Judge Costello took steps to help these families. The first county Poor House was built during his years in office, to take care of the most distressing cases.

14. A letter to the author from Mr. J. E. Pittman of Enterprise, Alabama, February 10, 1947.

This proved insufficient and the County Commissioners organized the County by beats for the distribution of aid to the needy.¹⁵ The state helped in this by furnishing free corn and salt to those members of a serviceman's family in want. Judge Costello was killed on January 1, 1863, at Murfreesboro, after having been wounded at Shiloh.

Bowling W. Starke was elected to succeed Costello as Probate Judge on May 8, 1863.¹⁶ Starke was an ex-serviceman who was captain of Company A of the Eighteenth Alabama Infantry until wounded at Shiloh. During his first months in office, his chief problems were taking care of the poor, orphans, and widows. As the war continued these problems became increasingly acute, for as more men left for service the production of the necessities of life decreased proportionately. This situation caused the men in the Army to become worried about their families and more of them began coming home without permission to see for themselves how things were. Some of these were cases of desertion and the thinly settled condition in the southern section of the county made hiding from the authorities comparatively easy.

The southern portion of Coffee, Dale, and Henry

15. Manuscript history of Elba, written by Billy Van. Filed under Coffee County in Archives Department, Montgomery.

16. The Civil Register of County Officers, Vol. III., p. 125.

Counties with the adjoining part of Florida became a hiding place for deserters from the Armies, runaway slaves, and an increasing number of unprincipled outlaws.¹⁷ Destitution and near starvation brought desperation. These misguided men found it imperative to organize. Eventually, in the winter of 1862 - 1863, a central camp was established. It was about fifteen miles below Geneva in the Choctawhatchee swamp of Florida. Realizing now that they were all outlaws they ironically called themselves the First Florida Union Cavalry, and for two years these hungry unfortunates committed various outrages while on bushwhacking expeditions, under the leadership of Joseph Sanders, who had been a Confederate officer. Other small bands operated independently and the people of Coffee and neighboring counties lived in constant fear of bodily harm or of having their property stolen or burned.

In January, 1863, Governor Shorter wrote to President Davis that nearly all the loyal men of southeast Alabama were in the Army, and that the country was suffering from the outrages of Tories and deserters.¹⁸ On August 4 of the same year he wrote to General Howell Cobb, Commander of the Florida District with headquarters at Quincy, Florida, ask-

17. The local people referred to these outlaws as "Abolitionists." This term was applied to all who opposed the Confederate cause.

18. Fleming, op. cit., p. 126.

ing for help in fighting deserters.¹⁹

In January, 1863, Governor Shorter sent General Joseph H. Clanton to Coffee County to help organize a defense. He had power to use all able-bodied men for thirty-day enlistments and what equipment and supplies were available. There was a mass meeting of the citizens of the county at Elba on January 22, 1863, to formulate plans to carry out the wishes of the Governor. Doctor J. G. Moore was elected Chairman. The following resolutions were read by Cappa T. Yelverton:

It is the sense of this meeting that thanks of our people are due and are hereby tendered to His Excellency, Governor Shorter, for promptness in furnishing our section with all the means in his power for the defense of this section of the state.

Resolved: That we recognize in the mission of General Joseph H. Clanton sent here by the Governor, a source of proud gratification and hereby express our cordial approval of the same.

Resolved: That we will defend ourselves to the last extremity. Whereas the Counties of Henry, Dale, Coffee, and Covington have been entirely exposed to the raids of the abolitionists and whereas this section of country has been recently startled and alarmed by the presence of the enemy at or near Geneva, in Coffee County, and whereas citizens of this section, who have gone down to the coast to make salt, have had their kettles and utensils broken up, and have been compelled to flee for their lives; and whereas we learn with pride and satisfaction that our excellent Governor has taken prompt measures for our protection, by sending General Clanton, a man endowed with extraordinary bravery to lead us.

19. Shorter to Cobb, August 4, 1863, in The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Ser. I, Vol. 27, Part II, p. 273.

The group approved the resolutions and the thirty-day enlistments of all able-bodied men for defense. The group of citizens also passed a resolution asking that these men be enlisted in the Confederate forces at the end of their thirty days, and be stationed on the coast to defend salt makers or between Pollard and the Chattahoochee.²⁰

The outlaws in Coffee County were called Ward's Raiders after one of their leaders, but in the spring of 1863, a new leader came to the fore in the group. John Clark, a native of Coffee, obtained a furlough from the army of General Braxton Bragg in eastern Tennessee. He failed to return to duty, and the local people believed his story, that he was sent back to round up slackers for the Army. He was exposed when a letter that he had entrusted to another to mail was lost. A young Mehaffey boy found it and carried it to a Mr. Sims, the Missionary Baptist preacher in the village of Clintonville.

When Clark's secret was out, he became bolder in his raids and used the open roads to move his brigands. No longer were their forays limited to the hours of darkness, for they were the most powerful force in the section, and could move at will. Early one morning the Home Guard made a surprise call at a house near Clintonville supposed to be harboring the criminals and scattered them. One of the outlaws, Josh Wheelus, was injured slightly and captured. The

²⁰. The Southern Advertiser, Troy, Alabama, January 22, 1863.

outlaws were infuriated at this occurrence and sent a letter to the Home Guard challenging them to an open battle to be fought in Gunter's Field, a piece of cleared land on the east side of the road two miles north of Clintonville. The Home Guard ignored the letter. A tragic feature of this action was the cold-blooded shooting of a boy named Mat Flowers by the brigands. The youth knew too much to fall into the hands of the guards.²¹

Wishing to destroy the Grand Jury, War, and Con-
scription Records, the outlaws set fire to the Court House at Elba in the early morning of September 1, 1863. Most of the records were burned before the fire was discovered by an old negro, Munday Hammond, who gave the alarm. To facilitate their escape the bridge across Pea River was fired by the outlaws after they passed over.

The Elba Home Guard under a Captain Payne gave chase and overtook them fourteen miles from Elba near the present Fairview School, where a pitched battle was fought. Four members of the Home Guard were killed: William Bell, Moke Carmichael, Robert Brooks, and Thomas Larkin. One outlaw was killed, and their leader, John Clark, and one other captured. The Guard, returning to Elba, was met by an angry mob and had to guard their prisoners. The next day,

21. A collection of essays on Coffee County by Nell Fannin Hutchison. Filed under Coffee County in Archives Department, Montgomery.

September 2, 1863, Clark was shot by one of the guards, Frank Bullard, while trying to escape. The other prisoner was taken out immediately and hanged.²²

It was comparatively quiet in this section from the Autumn of 1863 to the fall of 1864. This was due to the effectiveness of the county Home Guards, and to the fact that the Union Army had forces stationed on the coast in the vicinity of Pensacola, who sent patrols through the region. They also harbored and fed the negroes and deserters, whose chief motive for plundering was thus dissipated. One of the Union patrols came to Elba in August, 1864, and stayed for a few days. They were well disciplined and did not destroy, plunder, or kill.²³

In October, 1864, the raiders were again active; there was a force of from 1000 to 1500 men camped in Coffee County about fifteen miles below Geneva. They were raiding and were a continual threat to Coffee and Dale Counties. In September, 1864, they killed a party of four who were returning from the Gulf with a load of salt. They were reported to be planning a campaign against Elba, to get vengeance for their defeat there in 1863. Dale and Coffee appealed to the surrounding counties for help in guarding against the expected invasion. The neighboring counties could not give the

22. Ibid.

23. The Southern Advertiser, Troy, Alabama, August 28, 1864.

needed assistance due to the shortage of men and arms.²⁴

About fifty yankees and deserters crossed Coffee and entered Dale County, and were soundly defeated in a night battle on December 18, 1864. The citizens of Newton were aided by the reserves of Barbour County. The raiders were forced to retreat south and the people of the communities through which they passed inflicted more casualties upon them.²⁵

On January 2, 1865 there occurred the largest battle between the raiders and the Home Guard; it was a victory for the local people. The outlaws opened the battle by attacking Pollard, a small town in south Alabama, where a small military garrison had been stationed all during the war. They captured and burned the town, but were surprised in the act by the Home Guard who gave battle. E. W. Starke, Probate Judge of Coffee County, was commanding the men of Coffee, Dale, and Henry Counties. This was the only time the Guards of the different counties operated together as a unit, and it proved a wise policy. The outlaws were soundly defeated and retreated toward Pensacola where they would have the protection of the Federal garrison.²⁶

24. The Southern Advertiser, Troy, Alabama, October 7, 1864.

25. Ibid., December 25, 1864.

26. Ibid., January 6, 1865.

After the war ended, reports of outlaw outrages reached Montgomery, and General A. J. Smith, commander of Federal forces at Montgomery, sent a company of Cavalry to ascertain the truth of the report of robberies and depredations, and to remedy the evils as far as possible. What action was taken is not known, for only the report of the dispatch of the troops is available.²⁷

The recount of this episode should not leave the impression that there was a large element of Coffee County manhood among these deserters and outlaws. The significance of this circumstance to Coffee County lies in the geographical consideration. Coffee County, being a relatively sparsely settled country, heavily wooded, and just north of the Choctawhatchee swamp, figures in this chapter of Civil War history largely as a victim.

The Confederate soldiers who came back to Coffee at the end of the war found things in bad shape. The civil government appeared to be almost without authority to operate, and with the fear of the law removed, lawlessness was still rampant. The mail service and other connecting links with the outside world had been broken. The women, and children, and old people had done what they could; they had worked and waited and hoped that time would improve conditions. At last their men had returned - that is many of them had.

27. John Witherapoon DuBois, Alabama's Tragic Decade, Ten Years of Alabama 1865 - 1874, p. 3.

CHAPTER VI

RECONSTRUCTION

The physical let down of the people was complete following the surrender of the Confederate Armies. They had worked hard and sacrificed for the soldiers in the field. Life had always been hard work with little pleasure, and now the people saw part of their savings destroyed, and their social system undergoing a drastic change.

The discharged soldier, upon reaching Coffee County, found little to draw him out of the state of indifference into which the surrender of the armies had cast him. Although they county had not been invaded by organized armies, the local bands of outlaws had destroyed and burned public and private property. Labor was scarce during the war and the buildings had been allowed to deteriorate, and some of the farm land was overgrown with brush. The soldier who needed and desired rest saw nothing ahead but a long period of hard work to provide for his family.

The surrender of the military department of which Alabama formed a part on May 4, 1865, left the state without a civil government recognized by the United States authorities until June 21, 1865. On that date, President Johnson, by formal proclamation, named Lewis E. Parsons as provisional governor. Parsons had power to reorganize the civil government. On July 20, 1865, he issued a procla-

mation calling for an election for members to a constitutional convention. The election was held on August 31, and John G. Moore, who was serving as representative, was chosen to represent Coffee at the convention.¹

The convention met on September 12, 1865, and wrote a constitution to replace the one written in 1861. In writing the constitution, the convention tried to do what sentiment in the North demanded. The negroes were recognized as free and given equal property and civil rights under the law, but were denied the franchise. An election for state and county officers, and for members of congress, was provided for in the constitution.²

The election for county officials was held on the first Monday in November, 1866. Eolling W. Starke, the incumbent, was reelected Probate Judge. C. S. Lee was elected sheriff and John G. Moore was elected to continue as representative. William A. Ashley, who had served in the Alabama Senate from 1855 to 1857 as a Whig, was chosen to represent Coffee in the Senate.³

The legislature on January 7, 1866, passed an act giving the Commissioners of Coffee County authority to levy a

1. Owen, op. cit., Vol. I., p. 272.

2. Ibid., p. 272.

3. From the original election returns in the Alabama Department of Archives and History.

tax of one-fourth of one per cent on all the taxable property to collect money to replace the court house burned by the "Raiders" in 1863.⁴ Since the old court house was burned the county had been renting offices from C. S. Lee and R. P. E Hooks, paying them each twenty dollars a month rent.⁵

In April, 1866, the commissioners court appointed J. B. Simmons, J. W. Harper, A. V. A. Vaughn, B. A. Cummings, and F. M. Rushing as a building committee to let the contract for the new building. Major B. H. Lewis submitted the low bid of \$4,600 to erect the court house. The building was completed and turned over to the county on June 4, 1867.⁶

Major Lewis was paid by county treasury notes, and it was provided by the court that if these notes were not paid when due, the county would pay twenty dollars a month as interest. The total contract price was \$4,600, and two payments were paid of \$1633.33 each. Major Lewis must have experienced some difficulty in collecting the final installment, for on January 6, 1869, he accepted a compromise settlement of \$1,313, which was \$220.24 less than the origi-

4. Acts of the Alabama Legislature (1866-66), p. 334.

5. Carnley, op. cit.

6. Ibid.

nal contract.⁷

During this period Coffee County was depleted in area by the creation of two new counties. Crenshaw County was created by the legislature on November 24, 1866, out of portions of Coffee, Pike, Covington and Butler Counties. Coffee lost the western half of township seven, range nineteen to Crenshaw.⁸ Geneva was made a county by the legislature on December 26, 1868, out of parts of Coffee, Dale and Henry Counties. Coffee lost all of the territory in townships one and two of ranges nineteen, twenty, twenty-one and twenty-two, and sections thirty-one through thirty-six of each range of township three.⁹

The Republican Congress refused to recognize the good intentions of the people of Alabama and on March 2 and 23, 1867, passed acts relegating them to a condition of military dependence. The constitution of 1865 was declared null by the federal authorities, although two sessions of the legislature had met under it, taxes had been collected, and new counties had been created. On the first, second, and third days of October, 1867, an election was held for a convention to write a constitution to replace that of 1865.

Thomas W. Yarbrough was elected to represent Coffee County at the convention which met on November 5, 1867.

7. Ibid.

8. Acts of the Alabama Legislature (1865-66), p. 38.

9. Acts of the Alabama Legislature (1868), p. 446.

Nothing is known of Yarbrough's political beliefs, but considering the conservative voting of the people in 1865 and in 1868 when voting on the constitution of 1867, it is inconceivable that they would have voted for either a "carpet-bagger" or a "scalawag." The convention had a large element of negroes, people from the north who were not citizens of Alabama, and even some foreigners.

The people of Alabama were incensed over the flouting of their rights and turned the constitution down when it was submitted to them in 1868. Only one hundred and eighty-two white people and eighty-two colored voted for the constitution in Coffee County out of a total of one thousand three hundred and ninety-eight registered voters.¹⁰ Only 19.38 per cent of the voters in Coffee approved the constitution, whereas 47.08 per cent of the voters for the state as a whole approved it.¹¹

The voters of Coffee could express their displeasure more easily than those in some of the other counties, for a permanent military garrison was never stationed in the

10. From the original election returns in the Alabama Department of Archives and History.

11. Williams, op. cit.

county under whose supervision and intimidation voters could have been herded to the polls to "vote right". There was no large colored population nor any great wealth to attract the type of people who robbed the citizens of some sections of the South. Federal officials came to the county, but did not seriously molest the people or the county government. It was due to these facts that Coffee was able to keep some of the same men in county offices and in the legislature who had served in the same capacity during the war. .

In 1867, a federal official came to the county, and those who wished could take the oath of allegiance to support the Federal Constitution and become qualified voters. A total of 1,438 took the oath, 239 of whom were colored.¹² The largest number of votes cast up to this time was in the presidential election of 1860, when 1,274 people voted. The 1,199 white men who took the oath, represented a large per cent of the white men of voting age.

The election of 1868 was held under the supervision of a federal representative sent to the county for that purpose. This representative had been instructed to be present at the poll and to pass on each person's qualifications before anyone might vote. Due to the fact that he stayed in one of the

12. Taken from the original copy of the oaths with the signature of the persons taking the oath. Alabama Department of Archives and History.

saloons most of the time, while would be voters waited in varying degrees of exasperation, the voting went on for several days. Some of the citizens of the county became disgusted at the turn things had taken and threw the ballot boxes in Pea River, but the federal official and his assistants declared a Mr. Weeks the Probate Judge.¹³ Nevertheless, Weeks was not recognized by the citizens and Bolling W. Starke, the incumbent, who had been running against Weeks continued to serve as Probate Judge. No federal troops appeared in Week's behalf. In this election also John G. Moore was declared to have been reelected to the legislature. As for the presidential election of 1868, the people of Coffee County definitely registered their will. Ulysses S. Grant, the Republican candidate, received only seventy-five votes, but Horatio Seymour, the Democratic candidate, received 843.¹⁴ The Republicans received 47.98 per cent of the total vote for Alabama, but received only 8.17 per cent of the Coffee County vote.¹⁵

The war interrupted the flow of settlers to Coffee County and since the war it has never been resumed in large proportion. The people of the East were still on the move, but they were going to Texas or further West. In studying

13. Ham, op. cit.

14. Original election returns in Alabama Department of Archives and History.

15. Williams, op. cit.

the population for 1870, it has to be kept in mind that Coffee lost territory and population to Crenshaw County in 1866 and to Geneva County in 1868.

The total population in 1870 was 6,171.¹⁶ There were 1,020 negroes, which was only 16.52 per cent of the total population. The lack of immigration to the county in the period from 1860 to 1870 is shown by the origin of the people. In 1860, only 59.66 per cent were born in Alabama, but in 1870 the percentage born in Alabama was 74.28. The following table gives the origin of the people born in the South and the comparative percentages for 1860:

16. Photographic Reproductions of the Manuscript Sheets of the United States Census Enumerators for Alabama in 1870, University of Alabama Library. All of the tabulations on population in this chapter are transcribed from this source. The census of 1870 was so poorly administered by Carpetbaggers in the South and other incompetents elsewhere that it may not be accepted without reservation. It is nevertheless quoted in the belief that it represents a relatively accurate account of conditions in Coffee County where Carpetbaggers and Scalawags did not gain political control.

ORIGIN OF POPULATION FOR 1870

<u>State</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>1870</u> Per Cent	<u>1860</u> Per Cent
Alabama	4,522	74.25	59.68
Georgia	1,029	16.67	26.54
South Carolina	250	4.03	7.31
North Carolina	159	2.57	5.01
Virginia and West Virginia	48	.77	.23
Tennessee	4	.06	.10

Only eleven people were born in the northern part of the United States. New York contributed five, Massachusetts three, Delaware two, and New Jersey one. Of the two foreign born, England and Ireland contributed one each.

The evaluation of all property in 1870 was \$467,036.¹⁷ The greatest wealth was still to be found in farm land and farm equipment. Seventy-seven per cent of the reported wealth was invested in these two things.

The freeing of the slaves increased the number of people used in tabulating the figures for 1870 for only the whites were legal owners of wealth before the war. The per capita wealth for 1870 was higher than for 1860, but was a

17. Ninth Census of the United States (1870). All of the tabulations on wealth, agriculture, churches, and education in this chapter are transcribed from this source.

great decrease from that of 1860. The wealth per person increased from \$43.12 in 1850 to \$145.31 in 1860, but in 1870 had declined to \$75.63. The average wealth per family in 1850 was \$259.80, but in 1860 had increased to \$366.57, whereas, in 1870 it was only \$393.53. The depression following the war caused all property to decline in value. The slaves represented wealth in 1850 and 1860 which was lost before 1870.

In 1870, there were 30,545 acres of improved farm land and 44,374 acres of unimproved land valued at \$308,110. The size of the farms on the average was small. The following table shows the distribution of farms as to size in 1860 and 1870:

Acres					
3 and under 10	10 and under 20	20 and under 50	50 and under 100	100 and under 500	500 and under 1000
Number of Farms					
<u>1870</u>					
37	58	375	160	54	1
<u>1860</u>					
6	70	357	206	186	4

The loss of the slave labor probably was a contributing factor in the swing toward smaller farms.

The total value of all farm productions, including betterments and additions to stock, was \$811,668 for the year ending June 1, 1870. The largest single item of wealth the

farmers owned, not counting the land, was the 21,918 head of livestock valued at \$214,622. The following table shows comparative figures of farm animals held in 1850, 1860 and 1870. (The table would lack significance because of a reduction of Coffee County's landed area, a reduction of 32.68 per cent, unless allowance for this loss were made. Column four, therefore, has been added to make that allowance as a basis of comparison in showing general loss of the tragic decade).

Farm Animals

<u>Animals</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>1870</u> <u>plus 32.68</u> <u>per cent</u>
Horses	1,054	1,264	617	819
Mules	112	523	321	425
Milch Cows	4,063	4,435	2,142	2,842
Working Oxen	716	210	965	1,280
Other cattle	11,885	9,294	4,381	5,812
Sheep	2,744	3,685	4,059	5,365
Swine	20,266	23,859	9,433	12,515

There were only 3.85 animals per person in 1870, whereas, in 1850 there had been 7.59 per free person or 6.87 per capita counting slaves. In 1860 the figures had stood at 3.27 and 4.49 respectively. Cotton had gradually become the dominant cash crop and the farmers were sacrificing production of other things to this staple.

The production of all farm products had declined badly during the war years and even for 1870 production figures stand in poor comparative position with production figures for the antebellum years. The following table presents this comparison:

Farm Production				
<u>Product</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>1870</u> <u>plus 32.68</u> <u>per cent</u>
Indian Corn (bushels)	136,610	257,822	121,352	161,009
Oats, bushels	6,014	2,508	4,253	5,642
Tobacco, pounds	785	229	1,052	1,395
Cotton, bales	1,403	5,294	2,104	2,791
Wool, pounds	4,120	3,292	6,737	8,938
Peas and beans (bushels)	9,251	33,141	5,146	6,827
Sweet potatoes (bushels)	51,359	78,357	28,254	37,487
Irish potatoes (bushels)	88	892	817	951
Sugar, pounds	3,000		7,000	9,287
Molasses, gallons	6,593	3,483	13,093	17,378
Honey and wax (pounds)	19,394	8,577	9,618	12,761

In 1860, there were thirty-nine bushels of potatoes, corn, beans, peas, and all types of grain raised per person, but in 1870, there were only twenty-six bushels of all these commodities raised for each inhabitant.

In 1870, there were twenty-eight organized churches in the county, but only twenty-five church buildings. This is a decrease of nineteen churches from the total of forty-seven in 1860. Some of the churches perhaps fifteen, listed in 1860 were in the 329 sections of territory lost to Geneva and Crenshaw counties. The twenty-five remaining church buildings had accommodations for 3,200 people. The two Presbyterian churches had accommodations for 200 people. The Baptist churches accommodated 3,000 people and the Methodist churches 2,000. There were seats now for more than eighty-four per cent of the people, white and colored. The buildings had an overall evaluation of \$5,750; the average value of the buildings was \$230.00.

A majority of the population of Coffee county in 1870 were illiterate. The United States census reports 1,452 who could not read and 1,512 who could not write. This is out of a total of 2,592 people over eighteen years of age. The per cent of illiteracy in 1870 was 56.01, while in 1850, it was only 32.58. This large increase in illiteracy was due in part to the slaves having been freed, for they figured for the first time in the tabulation figures for 1870. But in that the negroes formed only 16.62 per cent of the population, their addition to this compilation does not account for the total increase in illiteracy of 25.43 per cent. The war had played havoc with the education of the white children. Some of the teachers served in the army or took

other jobs. Fewer children could take advantage of what opportunities were offered, for with the men gone many of them had to work.

There were only 605 children attending school in 1870, out of a total of 2,307 people between the ages of five and eighteen. Of this number only eight were colored, of the 597 whites, 293 were boys and 304 were girls. In 1850, 30.76 per cent of the children of school age were attending school, but in 1870 only 26.22 per cent of those between the ages of five and eighteen were enrolled in school. Eliminating the negroes here, it appears that school attendance in 1870 among the whites was improving, but the situation was deplorable. This is not surprising considering the impoverished condition of the county and the state, and the type of government which was handling the state affairs.

CONCLUSION

Coffee County was settled in the 1830's, chiefly by people from Georgia and South Carolina. Most of the settlers were poor and did not have money to buy large tracts of land. Neither did they have the large numbers of slaves which were necessary to the production of cotton on a large scale. These things caused Coffee County to be a section peopled by small farmers, but the one hundred and twenty-eight per cent increase in the number of slaves, from 1850 to 1860, shows that the economic and social structure was undergoing a change. If the Civil War had not interrupted its development, in time Coffee County might have had a social and economic structure approaching that of the black-belt.

In all the period under discussion Coffee County was strictly rural. The towns of Elba and Clintonville were hardly more than little villages. These people were poor, uneducated farmers, often isolated by distance, forest, and poor roads. Yet a community interest was prevalent. Life revolved around the churches, whose edifices, primitive in construction, nevertheless had seating space sufficient for nearly the whole population. This unusual fact indicates an enormous church attendance, a circumstance which may have been prompted by a desire for religious satisfaction, but which also was prompted by yearning for satisfaction of

gregarious instincts.

At the church gatherings, around the village or community stores, at occasional social gatherings at homes, older people met, exchanged thoughts, made plans for mutual assistance, while the youthful played and courted. While women talked of their hardships, and babies, and hopes, men talked of crops, and the price of cotton, and political issues.

The greater strength of the Whig Party in Alabama lay in the black-belt, but the conservative politicians of that party and section often had the support of large numbers of voters in southeast Alabama. Coffee County usually voted Democratic but twice, in the presidential election of 1848 and the congressional election of 1853, it gave the Whig candidates majorities. In these instances the majority of voters in this county, one of the poorer sections of the state, aligned itself with the planters of the black-belt. It does not follow, however, that this was so because these people were under dominance of the planter class. The fact that in all elections except those of 1848 and 1853 they voted the Democratic ticket yet twice decided otherwise indicates a strict independence in political matters. Indeed, when the great issues of 1860 were being debated in the mind of every Southern voter, the men of Coffee County expressed themselves in no uncertain terms.

The candidates, in the election for delegates to the

Secession Convention, running on a platform for immediate secession received only fifty-six per cent of the total Alabama vote, but in Coffee County the percentage was sixty-six. Here then was one of the poorest elements of southern society voting, by a larger majority than that expressed in some of the wealthier sections, for preservation of the institution of slavery even to the extent of secession and almost inevitable warfare. This fact is in contradiction to the widely held thesis that the antebellum planter dominated politics, and led the South in secession. Rather it is an indication of the fear of the poor whites that they be placed in legal equality and surely in economic and perhaps even social competition with the blacks.

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